

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
G. ARTHUR PEARSON

(OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 506.

FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 10TH, 1898.

[ONE PENNY.]

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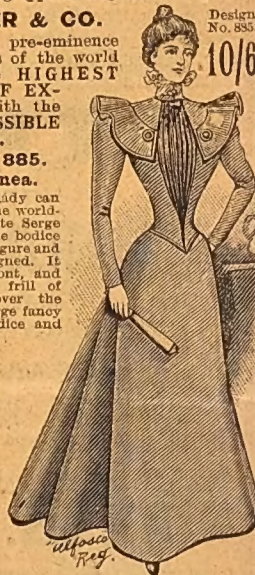
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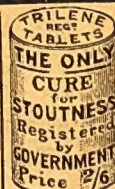
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SHORT STORIES

No. 506.

ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending September 10th, 1898.

A RIVAL'S TRIBUTE.

SEVEN or eight men, mostly members of the Venetian aristocracy, were smoking the presented cigarettes round the beautifully appointed supper table of Signorina Marina, the celebrated *prima donna*, who, both by her talents and beauty, had for some time reigned supreme over the susceptible hearts of her countrymen.

In the centre of the table was a magnificent wreath of the costliest flowers, which were just beginning to droop in the heated atmosphere, while countless other similar offerings, more or less withered, lay about the room.

"That has kept well," said Marina, as she removed the cigarette from her red lips and pointed with her jewelled fingers to the fragrant circle which lay beneath the rose-coloured shades of the antique silver candelabra.

"Affection's offering, I suppose?" answered the Count de Rossi, who was sitting beside her, "the humble tribute of homage from some adorer, chained by the spell of your beauty."

"It came from the Duke, after *Otello* last night," she replied, looking mischievously at him.

"And the others?" asked the Count, whose brows had contracted at the mention of the Duke's name.

EDITED

BY

C. ARTHUR PEARSON

"Oh, some of them are weeks old, those hanging over my writing-table I had three days ago, after *Il Trovatore*. They were lovely."

"But they are faded already. True emblems of the evanescent enthusiasm which offered them," said a languid poet, whose pessimism was his pride, and who was writing an epic round Marina.

"The enthusiasm of Venice for her Marina will never fade," said the Count warmly, turning an adoring gaze on the dazzling figure beside him.

Marina was a creature of ever changing moods, and the poet's words came with a sense of evil foreboding. They gave expression to a terrible thought that had already risen in her mind, and in the midst of the applause which greeted her admirer's speech her face remained sad, and there was a mournful cadence in her voice as she answered:

"The poet is right. Human favour is but as a bubble and vanishes in the moment of its pride. In every outburst of applause which rejoices the artist's heart, there lies an undertone of fear lest it should be the last. A month ago I reigned supreme; I was the idol of Venice. Now and her star has appeared above the horizon, and the fickle hearts of my countrymen are beginning to worship at the shrine of my rival."

"Marina can have no rival!" exclaimed two or three at once.

"You cannot deceive me, my friends. A woman knows intuitively when the hearts of her lovers grow cold, and since Carlotta has been singing there has not been that nerve pulse of enthusiasm beating in the applause they have offered to me. They do it as a matter of course; it is cold; their hearts are not in it. I see it, I feel it; but I shall not suffer defeat. Venice will be the loser," she concluded with a proud smile.

"Carlotta was splendidly received last night," said Count Sposi, who owed Marina a grudge for having refused to share his coronet and impoverished fortunes. "She certainly sings divinely, and as to her youth and beauty there cannot be two opinions."

"I wonder you are not listening to her now!" said his hostess sharply. "Marina is not yet so destitute of friends but that she could well spare the Count Sposi. You may think, perhaps, to humiliate me, the deposed queen of song, by the praises of my successor! But, beware!" she added, and her face assumed an expression worthy of Lucrezia Borgia, "Marina is not easily slighted! At seventeen my dagger pierced the heart of my rival in love. To-day I am twenty-four, and my hand shall not spare my rival in fame."

"But why speak of yourself by so absurd a title as 'a deposed queen'?" asked de Rossi lightly. "The most Carlotta can ever hope to do is to share your throne, if you permit it."

"A throne, like a heart, can never be shared, my dear Count."

"You are cruel to talk like this to your faithful friends who are gathered round you, oblivious of the fact that Carlotta is undergoing the test which will make or mar her career."

"I am not ungrateful to you my friends," she said with one of her sunny smiles, "but something tells me that you will all go to the rising star, your voices will swell the chorus of adulation before many days have passed."

They protested with renewed ardour that none could ever take her place, they lavished eulogies and compliments upon her with unsparing hand, till, by degrees, the spoilt child of fortune was lured back to her most vivacious mood.

"There is one at least you may ever rely upon, one who will never forsake you, one who will be your slave till death," murmured de Rossi.

"You mean the Duke? He would have been here to-night only a matter of state importance kept him."

"No, I mean myself," said the other reproachfully, with a jealous pain gnawing at his heart.

She laughed merrily, and plucking a flower from the Duke's wreath pressed her lips to it and gave it to him as a peace offering.

For the next half-hour Marina excelled herself in the radiance of her smiles, the brilliance of her wit, and the witchery of her voice, till the possibility of her ever being dethroned seemed drive from all minds.

Towards midnight the door opened to admit an Austrian Count, who was generally admitted to be the best news agent in society.

"You are late, Herr Graf. You must do penance for your non-appearance, and confess what has kept you. Kneel down there, and make atonement!" said Marina with pretty imperiousness, pointing to a stool at her feet.

The Austrian let his ponderous form down with well-feigned contrition, and proceeded to relate all sorts of adventures:

"At last I turned in to hear Carlotta in the great scene of *La Nozze di Figaro*. I found the people going wild over her. They were behaving like lunatics, and some young fools near me were raving about her beauty, her angelic voice, and all that sort of thing. At the end of the act they called her seven times before the curtain! I can't see what they admire in her."

"They never did as much for me," thought Marina bitterly.

"I got so tired of the noise," went on the Austrian, "that I went behind, thinking to get a closer view of the syren; but her room was besieged, and after waiting about half-an-hour I saw the Duke of Acquavita escorting her and her mother to his own carriage. They say he is very much struck——"

"Ah! *diavolo!*" hissed Marina through her teeth, and fell back in a deadly swoon on her silken cushions.

Venice was divided into two factions, and public feeling ran high between the two rivals in the city. Count Sposi had made it his business to warn Carlotta's friends that her life was in danger from the malice of her sister-singer, and the partisans of the former unwisely boasted of their favourite's conquest of the Duke of Acquavita, a man of ancient name and princely fortune, both of which, it was said, he had already laid at the feet of the young artiste.

Marina behaved with dignified reserve, and at last surprised both her friends and her enemies by requesting that a meeting should be arranged between herself and Carlotta.

There was a great contrast between the two. Marina was a woman in the full flush of her matured charms, conscious of her power, with an indomitable will, and the experience of a stormy youth behind her. Carlotta was young, fresh, gentle of heart though ardent in temperament, as yet unsullied by the garish life on the other side of the footlights.

Her sweetness and purity seemed to disarm her rival, and Marina went towards her with outstretched hands, saying:

"Forgive me, and those of my foolish friends who have tried to pain you! We must be friends, sisters in our beloved art, sharing its pleasures and cares. The

world of song is wide, and holds fields of triumph for both of us. Let no petty jealousy mar the glory of our career!"

Carlotta's heart went out warmly to this generous overture, and welcomed her new friend with all the spontaneity of her nature.

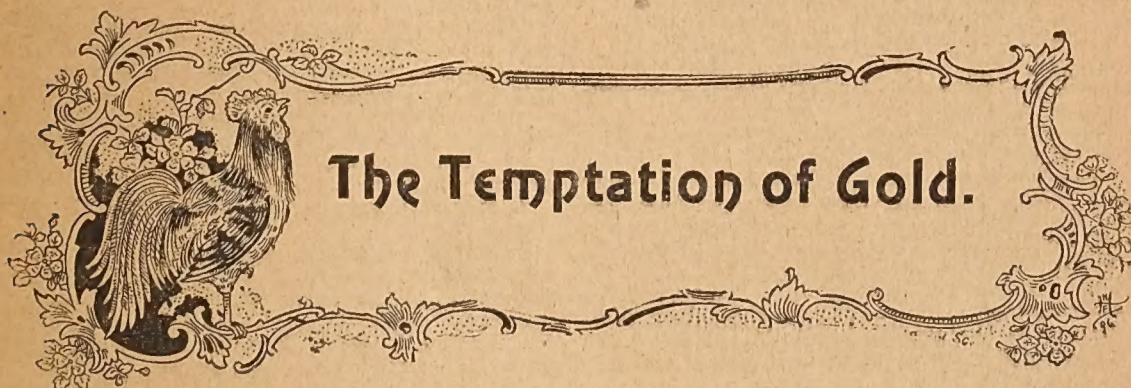
"She is charming. I must be at her benefit next week," said Marina, as she drove home with the Count de Rossi. "I must add my tribute to those of her admirers, and it shall not be one of mere fading leaves."

The night of Carlotta's benefit arrived, and amid all the brilliant, enraptured audience, none seemed more carried away by the enthralling charm of the young artiste than Marina.

At the close of the opera, the fair young girl, in the white robes of the penitent Marguerite, came forward again and again to receive the storm of acclamation that greeted her. As the curtain rose for the fifth time Marina rose in her box and hurled her "unfading tribute" with unerring aim.

It was a bronze wreath picked out with gold, and it fell, not at the feet, but on the temples of the smiling Marguerite, who sank lifeless on the boards where she had scored her triumphs, felled by the hand of her treacherous rival, cut off in the zenith of her fame by the imperishable gift of an implacable foe.

MARY FERMOR.



The Temptation of Gold.

TOM JENKINS ran his hand through the gold that lay heaped on the floor of the hut.

"It seems to me, Billy," he said slowly, "that hopin' to find it is better than findin' it."

Dull gleams of light from a smoky lantern fell athwart the face of the old miner, rugged, homely, deep-furrowed by time and hardships, and offering a marked contrast indeed to the handsome, patrician features of Billy Bailey, his junior partner.

"Findin', Billy, means leavin' here. It's an end to the wants and privations I've known for nigh on twenty years. But, somehow, I've come to like these still old mountains, and the singing of the pines, and the river. They've growed like friends, and I'm never lonely among 'em. Listen! you can hear 'em now. Perhaps it's the last time they'll ever sing for me."

"We're going back to civilisation," continued Tom, not heeding the other's lack of sympathy with his reminiscent mood, "and that means separation. I know you like me, Billy. A feller couldn't want a better partner than you've been for the two years I've knowed you. But with your eddication, and yer young blood, and yer ambitions, you ain't my sort in civilisation. We can't be the same there. I couldn't expect it. But I think a lot of you, Billy. I—"

"Oh, come, Tom," broke in his companion impatiently, "you're in the dumps to-night. Take a drink and brace up. Should think you'd look on the bright side of things now. We've worked and starved in these wilds for gold, until at last we've got it. Think of the ten thousand pleasures that this gold can buy for us. There's no life in these solitudes. It's there in the

crowded streets, and it can all be ours when we've got the god of gold on our side."

Billy laughed gloatingly in anticipation. Thence once more he fixed his eyes with a glittering intensity on the yellow heap which meant for him all that life can mean to a selfish, loveless nature.

"But it ain't for me," persisted Tom. "I'm past them things. If it wasn't for the hope of finding my old mother in England and makin' her comfortable, I'd stay. I don't care for the gold after a all. I've found it, and my hungerin' for it's satisfied."

Billy made no answer. He had long since become resigned to the diversity of their tastes, and to-night he was in no mood for argument. He got out some materials, and began to repair a rent in his coat. Tom rose presently, and dropped the nuggets into a sack. Then he arranged his blankets for the night.

"Put it a way safely, Billy," he said jocularly; "we're already on the edge of civilisation, and must learn to be pertickler."

"I'll look after it, never fear," said the other shortly; "good night."

Billy finished his task, but his mind was still busy with the thoughts of the future. He rose and stepped out into the night. At his feet the turbulent river rushed blackly along, its foam crests gleaming like dull silver in the clear starlight. Behind him towered in silent mystery the rugged, wooded mountains. The air was heavy with the scent of the pines.

But Billy saw none of the beauty of the night. The mountains awakened memories of hardships and hopelessness; the river was only a highway to civilisation.

He lit his pipe, and began to pace up and down the shelving shore.

There was none of the stuff of which heroes are made in Billy Bailey's composition. Had the fates seen fit to continue their kindly beginning, he would probably have developed into one of the horde of whitened sepulchres—those who observe the conventions to the letter, induce every desire with a studied care that wins the approval of men, and, when dead, are respectfully buried and speedily forgotten. On the contrary, fate had preferred giving Billy a chance to prove his mettle. His college career cut short by the melting away of his father's fortune, he awoke one morning to find himself face to face with the world, his wits his only capital.

He remembered to-night his struggle to maintain his social position; the slights heaped upon him by erstwhile boon companions; the gradual sinking away of hope, until, with starvation staring him in the face, he had shipped in a vessel bound for distant lands.

But now! Yet there was not so much, after all. Would it give him all the pleasures he hoped for?

If he only had Tom's share, too! The thought startled him, and he looked furtively about, as though already under surveillance.

Well, why not? What was Tom to him now? The old man cared nothing for gold—he had said as much. Why not double his fortune by a single coup? The skiff was all ready for the morrow's journey down the river. By daylight he could put many miles between himself and Tom before the latter could make the trip across the almost impassable mountain trail.

He weakened for a moment as he thought of Tom's almost motherly solicitude—of how throughout their wanderings the big-hearted miner had borne the brunt of the struggle. Even when the treasure was discovered, the old man's first words were: "I'm glad for your sake, Billy."

Then he asked himself if he, too, was growing sentimental, and to-night, of all nights, on the very eve of battle.

He walked back to the hut. Tom was fast asleep. The flickering light of the lantern fell on the corner where he lay, his powerful form half swathed in the tattered blankets, his brawny arms thrown above his head. The face, from which sleep seemed to have smoothed away the deep furrows, reflected the rugged honesty of his heart. But the touching picture meant nothing to Billy, who watched the sleeper for an instant and then proceeded to put his cowardly scheme into execution.

It was but the work of a few minutes to gather together the things necessary for the short journey down the river and to secure the treasure for safe transportation. There was a look of cunning triumph on his face as he completed his preparations. He was thinking of the surprise awaiting Tom, who had been "fool enough to believe in human friendship."

He made a cautious step toward the door of the hut, when a slight noise caused him to glance back over his shoulder. The next instant the bag of gold crashed to the floor, while Billy sank on his knees, as though felled by a blow. Tom was sitting bolt upright in bed, his revolver levelled at Billy's heart.

The two gazed at each other a moment in utter silence. Billy's eyes scanned the old man's face and read there reproach and pity, rather than a thirst for swift revenge. This somewhat re-assured him, and he rose to his feet.

"Well," he said bluntly, "what do you intend to do?"

"So," said Tom, with a long breath, "I was mistook in you, after all. To think that I give you my friendship and you wa'n't worth it! What am I going to do? What do men usually do when a partner turns thief?"

"You wouldn't shoot me, Tom?"

"Why not? Men's been killed for less than that, and the world was well red of 'em."

Then it did mean death.

As Billy realised this, his face turned ashen pale, while a palsying terror struck through him, rending his mask of bravado and revealing him as the pitiable dastard he was. He cowered before the old man, pleading hysterically.

"Oh, spare me, spare me, Tom. You said you cared nothing for gold, while I—I was mad with love of it! It is my idol—my everything. But take it, take it all—only give me my life—Tom—I—I—can't—die!"

"Get up," commanded the other coldly; "don't make me despise you worse than I do. What would you do if you was in my place? Shoot, wouldn't you? You'd kill me now, if you had the chance."

"But think, Tom, what life means to me; I'm young and—"

"Think what friendship meant to me, Billy. I'm old."

In the momentary silence that followed, the pines and the river could be heard singing their old, old song, heedless of the strife of mortals for a scrap of the treasure they guarded. Tom heard the song, and his bitterness seemed to go out with the weird melody. The hand that held the weapon dropped listlessly to his side.

"I'll spare yer life," he said hoarsely; "you can go."

Billy stood a moment as though he had not heard.

"You're free. Go!" said Tom.

The boy glanced from the old man to the bag of gold, and then turned slowly towards the doorway.

"You better take yer gold now," said Tom quietly, "as I s'pose you won't be coming back."

"Do you mean it?" gasped Billy.

"Certainly; half's yours, ain't it? There's only one thief in this camp, and it ain't me."

Tom proceeded to open the bag, and roughly divided the contents.

"You can take the boat; that goes with your half. As for me," he added, in a voice that wavered in spite of himself, "I'll do what I'd 'a' done if you'd 'a' robbed me. I'll stay a little longer with the mountains an' the river. They're uncertain sometimes, and sometimes they're dangerous, but on the whole they're better than men."

Billy vaguely appreciated the nature of the man with whom he was dealing, yet he felt that such nobleness required some acknowledgment. He sprang forward and tried to grasp the old man's hand.

"No, no—not that!" cried Tom fiercely. "Don't touch me. That gold is yours. Take it and go. But go quickly, Billy—for Heaven knows—I'm only human."

A. G. GALE.



Untold Tales of the Indian Mutiny.



By H. HUNTER.

VI.—NĀNĀ SAHIB'S RUBY.

HE was undoubtedly a grand old man. Ahmad Dutt, ex-trooper in the 2nd Native Cavalry. Fierce-eyed, clean-limbed, and with a length of arm which in his fighting days had often carried death to the heart of his enemy, he was now peacefully smoking his hukā as a "pension-wallah" under the shade of his own fig-tree, waiting patiently till Allah should summon him to join the ranks of the Faithful in the Paradise of the Prophet.

On his chin he wore a flowing beard of snowy whiteness, on his head an enormous turban of orange silk.

Yes, I could well believe that Ahmad Dutt, once a trumpeter in the famous 2nd Cavalry, which had mutinied at Calcutta, and offered their services to Dundas Pant, the Nānā Sahib, who had many a story of the "terrible year" locked away in the secret chambers of his retentive brain. For the old *sowar* had a wonderful memory, and a marvellous skill in draping his figures and arranging his scenes.

He seemed to have the faculty of seizing by natural intuition upon the true dramatic moment for the presentation of his pictures and the exhibition of his portraits.

Ahmad was one of the few men of the cavalry corps who had remained faithful to the Company's salt. But it was now only at rare intervals that the ex-trooper could be induced to talk.

"Can I tell the *Huzoor* the story of the Flaming Eye, of the Burning Heart, of the Great Ruby of Sulaiman, which Bajee Rao had from the Nabob of Oudh and bestowed upon Dundas Pant, when he made him his son, and gave him Bitoor for his portion and inheritance? Can I tell his honour the story of the Nānā's *Sirpesh*, the amulet which he wore in his turban to protect him from the evil eye, and the pestilence, and the power of his enemies? Yea, truly I can," said the ancient warrior with a low salaam, "if the *Huzoor* will condescend to listen."

"But the tale is long, O master. It hath as many chapters and visions as the book of the Prophet—the blessed Koran itself. It belongeth to the past as well as to the present, and the end thereof knoweth no man; for the Ruby, which of a truth possesses mystic and talismanic virtues, hath not been seen by mortal eye, save once, since the night when the signal light of the Nānā was extinguished in the waters of the Ganges at Fatehgarh."

"But sure, *Huzoor*, I am telling the tale as one of the foolish might tell it, and not like Ahmad Dutt, the son of Hassan Ali, in whose family it hath been told from generation to generation, even from the days of the Great Mogul, Shah Jehan, before ever the Peacock Throne, of which Sulaiman's Ruby was the most precious ornament, had been carried from Agra to Delhi, before

the Persian had crossed the Great River, or the Sahibs come over the Black Water.

"From his father Hassan Ali it was that thy servant heard the tale of the famous Ruby which Sulaiman wore on his finger and the Nānā wore in his turban."

"Hassan was Duffadar in a Mahratti troop in the time of Bajee Rao, and would tell the tale round the camp fire on the plains or in the courtyard of the *serai*, while the horses were resting and the food was being cooked. And when the dawn began to glimmer in the east, lo! the story would be still unfinished, for there was much to tell."

"I know not," muttered the old man solemnly, after a pause during which he puffed the smoke from the hukā slowly through his nostrils, "whether 'tis fitting to speak of the old ways in the new days. But the *Huzoor* wants to hear what perhaps the old *Sowar* alone can tell him? Be it so, my son. I, Ahmad, will tell of my father's story so much as concerns the *Huzoor* to know, and no more. For the Sahibs are not as we, who will listen to a story for the sake of the story till the stars begin to fade and the light of the coming day is seen in the sky."

"The white faces from the west are ever thinking how it will end, no sooner than the tale is begun. They would have us tell our stories as they ride their races; and are less anxious about how a story runs than how it finishes."

"Well, Allah's above all; and for the rest, it will be my own mouth that speaketh, *Huzoor*. And by the beard of the Prophet, the son of Hassan Duffadar will tell his honour nothing but truth—plain truth, which is what the fewest in this world can recognise when they see it; for, in sooth, 'tis much of a stranger amongst the children of men."

"Know, then, that in the days when Agra was still the capital of Shah Jehan, there came to that city a certain blind *fakir*, who had travelled to India with a caravan from Baghdad. His long wrap was of green, which showed that he had made the Holy Pilgrimage and was a worthy man."

"He asked to see the King's Chamberlain, and on being led into the presence of that officer requested to be taken before the Emperor. To him he made known that his youth and strength had been spent in searching for the Great Ruby which the Queen of the East had given to King Sulaiman, and the King had caused to be engraved with certain secret talismanic characters which gave the possessor of the stone power over the servants of Eblis, over the messengers of evil, over the malignant spirits who are the enemies of man, and over the lower angels who minister to his comfort."

"He re-counted all the perils and privations he had passed through, the ordeals he had undergone, the vows he had taken, the oaths he had sworn.

"True, O King!" said he. "I am now old and blind. But the morning of my days, the flower of my years, was surely well given to obtain that, the like of which for beauty and power, for value and excellence is not to be found elsewhere on this earth, save in one small corner of my poor girdle.

"Surely there is none that can say that thy servant hath wrought unwisely or spent his strength for naught; for, though his days be consumed and his flesh faileth, yet hath he obtained the desire of his heart.

"One generation followeth another, but the King liveth for ever; and in him shall the people put their trust.

"The Ruby, O Father of the Faithful! is a King's amulet.

"Allah never made but one such.

"Suliman never put the master-word of the wisdom which he had from Heaven upon any other.

"There is none, O King! that is like unto it. Though ye search the uttermost parts of the earth, ye shall not find it.

"The light of ten thousand years is flashed forth from every line. The fire which from the beginning of Time has burnt at the heart of all things is reflected from every face. Was it not through gazing too long and ardently at the splendour of its glory, which, like another sun, illuminated the darkness of the dread chamber, where, at last, I uncovered it that the light of my own eyes was put out. But the brightness of its beams remains to console me, for I was blinded by excess of light.

"Now, of a truth, O King! many and marvellous are the prophecies which have been written; and amongst them, is that which a holy man out of the north-west, yea, from the land of the Five Rivers, declared no less than five hundred years ago.

"The Nazarene," said he, "will come to this land of Hind; by force and fraud they will possess themselves of principalities and powers. And they will seek to drive out the old faith and establish a new. But they shall not succeed: nay, though they hold the land in irons and occupy it for one hundred years, they shall be driven out in the end, even by the edge of the sword. And ye shall smite them, O men of Hind, they and their little ones, with a great slaughter. Nevertheless, for one hundred years they shall rule in the land."

"That, *Huzoor*, was the old prophecy," said Ahmad, probably thinking some explanation necessary, "which the Panjabee fakir delivered, seven hundred years before the lotus was seen in the contentments, or the chupatties appeared in the villages; and it was often repeated by our Moulvies amongst the people.

"Behold now," said the finder of the Ruby; "my time draweth nigh, and there is but one thing left for me to do before Al Sijil closes my account and rolls up the scroll.

"There is no God but God, who hath brought me from a far country, even from El Kuds which is beyond Baghdad; and into thy hauds, O King! I deliver the Great Ruby of Suliman—thy wise men will tell thee the meaning of the inscription thereon—enjoining on thee to cherish and preserve it against the time when the Nazarene shall be lord in the land.

"It will not be in thy day, or in the day of the Prince, thy son; but it will surely come to pass, for it is written. Then shall they that follow the Ruby talisman

have no fear, for their enemy, though he spend blood and treasure, shall not be able to overthrow them.

"But thou must swear, O King, to build in thy chief city a mosque to the praise and glory of Allah, and the everlasting honour of his prophet. So much thy servant asks of thee in return for the Ruby, which has cost a lifetime to win, but will be a priceless possession to him who is faithful in the days which are to come."

"So the Ruby passed to Shah Jehan, and the famous mosque at Delhi rose to witness to the King's faith in the fakir's story.

"The stone—these eyes have seen it, *Huzoor*—was the largest and chief jewel in the Peacock Throne, which Abdool the Persian, of accursed memory, carried off with him into Iran. But it would weary thy ears to listen were I to tell the tales concerning the wonderful red crystal which Hassan, my father, had upon his tongue.

"Well, by the will of Allah, without whom nothing can happen that does happen, the Great Ruby of Suliman had got into the hands of Bajee Rao, the last of the old Mahratti chiefs, about the time that Wajid Ali, who was the last of the Kings of Oudh, got into trouble with the *sahibs* at Lucknow.

"Bajee had done Ali Shah a service, that some day I will tell the *Huzoor* if he pleases, for 'tis a good story though not for all ears to hear; and for payment the Mahratti demanded the ruby, which was now looked upon with jealousy by every ruler, and whose virtues were known in every bazaar.

"The Rajah on whose person glittered the Talisman of Suliman, when the hour of the fakir should arrive, was certain to end Emperor of India. That was the belief of the bazaar.

"Bajee did not get the Ruby out of Wajid without—but that also must stay for another telling. If once we get amongst the Begums, the Queen and Princesses, we shall never reach the Nani, on whom Bajee Rao bestowed the Ruby when he adopted Dündü Pant as his son.

"Said I not the tale was long? So, it took the Mahratti three years to obtain the jewel from the King. And was there no plotting in the women's quarters? Yea, there was more than plotting," and Ahmad made a very significant gesture which left no doubt that there was murder.

"We I, at last the Nani was the owner of the Ruby, and a mighty fine fellow he thought himself. True, it made a magnificent *sir-pesh* for his turban, in which it blazed like a flaming eye, flashing its burning rays on all it touched. It shone with a brilliancy that dazzled and a potency that confused; while the Nani smiled to see men blinking and winking under its glitter and glare. It made him vain and puffed up his heart with pride—and, of a truth, it was a very king of gems, that Ruby.

"There was a fire in it that was in no other stone that had ever been seen in Hind. There was a power in it that no other ruby had ever been found to possess. I can believe the old fakir who said that the brightness of its beauty had deprived him of his sight.

"The Nani wore the stone upon all great occasions. He was fond of trying its effect upon the *sahibs*. They would praise its purity, its size, its colour, and most of all the living fire at its heart which the longer one looked the fiercer it blazed, till one could have sworn it was burning into one's vitals. Oh! it was no common ruby.

"When the 'great agony' began, you may be sure that the Ruby was not forgotten, either by us behind the intrenchments on the Allahabad Road, or by that

crafty son of perdition, Tantia Topi, the Náná's butcher. Dundú Pant saw his father's son already sitting as Great Mogul in the Palace at Delhi, when, pointing to the flaming jewel in his turban, he swore by his head to the men who had marched to Kulianpore that victory would ever follow where the Ruby shone, and persuaded the *sowars* to return to Cawnpore instead of rushing on to Delhi as they were minded to.

"But when the *sahibs* saw the Ruby gleaming in the front they gave praise to Allah for sending them an easy prey, and the Náná's son had a score of shots whistling about his ears. They didn't harm him, however, and the men cried: '*Ajaib!*' a miracle! But that was the first and last time the Rajah of Bithoor exposed himself in the field.

"The Ruby might have all the virtues which the old fakir claimed for it, but, I suppose the Náná thought it was hardly playing fair to invite attention that was not convenient.

"When we had a dozen men die from sunstroke, it was the Náná's Ruby which got the credit of it.

"It was all over the place, that the Ruby was killing off the Feringhees like sheep, by burning them up in its fiery rays.

"Well you may laugh, *Huzoor*, but I, Ahmad Dutt, believe the Ruby was a true wonder stone; but the Náná was no better to begin with than a *budmash* and didn't understand how to work the charm or it wouldn't have fared so ill with him. And then even the *sahibs* must allow that twice the Ruby which saved Dundú Pant from the fate of the Moulvie of Fizabad.

"The *Huzoor* does not think so? Well, that is because he is not of the race.

"No, the Ruby did not bring the Náná the luck he expected; but the fault, *Huzoor*, was in the man and not in the stone. There were no wise men at Bithoor to interpret the writing—the dark saying of Suliman.

"Azimullah was a cunning plotter, who made love to the *mem-sahibs* that he might the more easily draw them into his net; but wisdom was a stranger to his lips.

"Babá Bhat and Tantia Topi were men of blood, who hated every white face and urged the Náná forward whenever his courage cooled.

"'Tread them down, tread them down!' they cried continually in his ears.

"A people terrible from the beginning. Let them not take root in the land. As with the husband so with the wife, as with the mother so with the child. Dost thou wear the Ruby for naught, O Dundú, son of Bae? Surely thou puttest thy father to shame before these white scum."

"But though the Ruby kept away the Evil Eye and was a charm against Black Magic, yet did fortune forsake the arms of the Náná.

"Then they who had followed him believing in the Ruby of Suliman, began to reproach and revile him, and clamour for their pay.

"'By the soul of my father,' said one, 'I am a fool to follow a man whom Allah despiseth—a man too mean for Allah to notice, a man left to his own devices and whose exaltation hath perished.'

"Full surey this Rajah of Bithoor is not he whom Heaven intended should wear the Ruby; and of a truth 'tis little we see of him or of it now,' and they began to desert him, for the *sahibs* were only a day's march from Cawnpore, and the Náná had fled to his palace at Bithoor after giving orders for the killing of the English ladies who were shut up in the city. But the *Sahib*, *Huzoor*, said they were soldiers and not slaughtermen, and

refused the work; so Tantia sent for butchers from the bazaar, and there came three black-browed sons of Eblis.

"Yea, truly, as thou sayest, it was a devil's deed, and of a surety the Devil hath taken all concerned in it—though I speak not for the Náná, since he had the Ruby.

"Everywhere, up and down through every chamber, in and out the corridors, along the terraces and below the verandahs of the *Zemana* at Bithoor, the *sahibs* searched for the *Rajah*. Many things they found in the Palace, things brought from over the Black Water, for the Náná had been in the country of the *sahibs*. Race-horses and dancing girls were on the walls, and English furniture in many of the rooms. But the man himself they found not, neither him nor his wives, nor the famous Ruby, of which even the *sahibs* had heard tell.

"He had gone up the Ganges to Fathgarh; and because of the Ruby which he wore no man laid hand on him, though the *sahibs* offered a big price for his head.

"His people said afterwards that he had committed his body to the Holy River; and when the signal light was extinguished in the middle of the stream, they all lifted up their voices and wept. But the *sahibs* who searched long for him, and raised his price to a lakh of rupees, (£10,000) say, that he only crossed the river, coming out again on the Oudh side.

"Yet was he never seen more by the Englishmen, though they sought for him diligently; since they knew he was alive and had the Ruby with him.

"It was the Ruby, *Huzoor*, to which he owed his life. The Moulvie was an honest soldier who fought fairly and did no murder; and for him the *sahibs* offered only half a lakh, yet it was enough. But even a lakh failed to bring in the Náná, because of the Ruby of King Suliman which he wore. The stone protected the bearer though he was without true wisdom to work the charm."

* * * * *

Only once, it seems, has the Ruby been seen again; since, as the Náná's *sir-pesh*, it blazed in his turban on the banks of the Ganges at Fathgarh.

One evening in January, 1870, a stranger muffled in a Cachmeri veil entered the shop of Mohamed Ali, jeweller in the Thumbi Bazaar at Delhi. He asked him to look at a very fine ruby which had formerly belonged to the Shah of Persia and had been purchased by the stranger at Shiraz as an investment.

Mohamed opened the paper containing the jewel, and instantly recognised the famous Ruby of Suliman.

The stranger, possibly reading something in the other's eye which determined him, tore the veil from his face and disclosed the features of Náná Sahib, but with an expression of such malignant hate that the jeweller, paralysed with terror, was unable to move a finger.

When he recovered his faculties, the Náná and the Ruby had both disappeared; and Mohamed, frightened out of his five wits by the adventure, never spoke of it till months afterwards.

The end of the Náná is wrapped in mystery; and that of the story of the Náná's Ruby, as my friend Ahmad Dutt put it, "known to no man," for the Great Ruby of Suliman, better known to us as Náná Sahib's Ruby, hath not been seen by mortal eye since Dundú Pant was recognised in the Delhi Bazaar.

Next Week we shall begin a series of Stories by
LEVIN CARAC, under the general heading,
"The Homespun Yarns."

A BACHELOR'S MISTAKE.

MR. JOHN CLARK, the hero of this sketch, had lived fifty years alone, when he might have been blessed with "God's best gift to man—woman."

Still, as Clark was decidedly a wealthy man, his friend, Arthur Gould, thought he would make an excellent husband for his sister, who was slightly on the shady side of thirty. So one evening, finding Clark in his solitary apartments, looking downcast and miserable, Gould said:

"Clark, I know what ails you."

"What makes you think anything ails me?" gruffly inquired Clark.

"Because you are not lively and happy. You are lonely and want society. No one can enjoy life without companionship. In short, you want a wife."

"I've got along all these years without one, and I can finish the same way."

"Because you have been a fool all these years is no reason why you should continue one."

"True!" said Clark. "Had I taken a wife twenty years ago I should have been happier to-day. But who would marry an old fellow like me now?"

"Many a nice girl would jump at the chance."

"I don't want an old maid," said this particular old bachelor. "Some pretty, bright girl might tempt me. But, then, this courting business I know nothing about, you see, and taking it on the whole I might pay too dearly in advance."

"Well," said Gould impatiently, "on the whole, if the truth was known, I think you are a trifle too lazy to live."

"Why, I'm quite ready for a bargain. Show me some of these nice girls you seem to think are so plentiful."

"If you please to visit my family you will have an opportunity of meeting many ladies. I will introduce you to my sister, for one; she will introduce you to others, and—"

"Good! I'll spend to-morrow evening with you."

"We shall be glad to see you."

They parted, and Clark's thick head was full of new ideas. At six o'clock next night he stood before his looking-glass trying necktie after necktie, and carefully paring what remained of his hair. At last he was fully equipped and started.

On his arrival he found none but the family present, and being introduced to the ladies, passed a pleasant evening.

He watched every movement of the younger lady, and before leaving had concluded to seek no further for a wife, providing the charming Miss Gould could be persuaded to become Mrs. Clark. She was attractive, pleasing in conversation, and graceful in manner.

"She is the woman for me," thought the bachelor, as he said "Good night," promising to call again in soon.

He went home from his second visit happier than from the first, for, in addition to his increasing admiration for the lady, he felt assured, by her evident exertions to entertain him, that his feelings were reciprocated.

One unfortunate circumstance must be explained before proceeding. Owing partly to Mr. Gould's carelessness in presenting the ladies as his wife and sister

merely, and partly Clark's confusion in confronting two women at once, he had mistaken one for the other, and fallen in love with Mrs. Gould (decidedly the prettier of the two), and who, perfectly innocent of his error, strove to make matters pleasant on behalf of her sister-in-law. She noticed once or twice that he addressed her as Miss Gould, but let it pass for a slip of the tongue consequent upon Clark's confusion and bashfulness.

Time passed, and the bachelor determined to speak. One evening he found Mrs. Gould alone, and was informed that "Arthur and sister" had gone to make a call, but would soon return. Clark expressed a little sorrow at their absence; now was his time, he thought; so summoning all his courage, he commenced:

"My dear lady, forgive me for speaking my mind frankly when I assure you that the happiest hours of my life have been passed in your society."

"Why, thank you for the compliment," said Mrs. Gould. "It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here, and you will enjoy life better than in the solitary existence you have hitherto led. Arthur has a deep interest in you, and I shall always be pleased to entertain you to the best of my ability."

"Thank you," said Clark. "I feel that a single life is an unhappy one, and if not too late I propose to amend."

"Indeed! Then you think of marrying?" said Mrs. Gould, glad for the sake of her sister-in-law. "I congratulate you. May I ask who is to be the honoured lady?"

"That depends upon you. I have never met with one who inspired me with such esteem, such love, as yourself. All I have I lay at your feet. Will you be my wife?"

He paused and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. Mrs. Gould, utterly confounded, sprang to her feet, exclaiming:

"Me your wife! Why, Mr. Clark, explain yourself!"

Her husband, just entering, caught the last words.

"What is the matter?" asked he, gazing alternately from his wife to Clark.

"That matter!" replied the astonished suitor. "You know as well as I do. Your sister appears to have taken fright at something—I don't understand what."

"My sister! Why, that is my wife!"

"Your wife!" screamed Clark. "Why have you deceived me in this way?"

"No one has deceived you, my dear fellow. You must have deceived yourself. That is my wife. This is my sister," pointing to the other lady now entering the room.

Poor Clark was struck dumb. He rose, seized his hat, made a low bow, and annihilated space between the Goulds and his own "bachelor's hall," where, in a short time, he was seated before a fire made of fancy neckties, sachet bags, light gloves and other superfluous articles of an old bachelor's toilet.

As to what he thought, said, or did after that time there is no account, but Mrs. Gould was his first love, and without doubt she was his last.

Football Players Competition!

OPEN TO
EVERYBODY.

£10 IN PRIZES.

OPEN TO
EVERYBODY.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each of which indicates the name of some well-known football player.

The first, for example, is "A young goose." This signifies, of course, Gosling. Ten names will appear each week for five weeks, making fifty names in all. Keep all your lists by you until you are told to send them in.

To the person who succeeds in solving the greatest number we will give

A CRISP £5 NOTE.

TO THE NEXT, £2; TO THE NEXT, £2; AND TO THE NEXT, £1;

while consolation prizes will be awarded to the extent of twenty handsome volumes which competitors may select for themselves from the catalogue of books issued by this firm.

If you are weak in the names of football players, your brother, or cousin, or male friend will give you a helping hand.

SHORT STORIES "FOOTBALL PLAYERS" COUPON No. 1.

1. A young goose.
2. An instructor.
3. People.
4. A weapon.
5. A satellite.
6. One who saves up.
7. A show place.
8. A Scotch county.
9. D. V.
10. Properly executed.

1. Gosling.

2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

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The Summary will Enable You to Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.



THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

TIME 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harrington, Lord Eskdale's military attaché, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent* to Harrington's sister, Ethel.

France and Germany declare war against Great Britain. An attempt to land at WORTHING is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 160 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

An inventor secures an audience with the Prince of Wales and demonstrates to him the utility of a new weapon, with the result that steps are immediately taken to manufacture an enormous number of them.

The *Hornet*, a torpede boat, commanded by Rodney, blows up the Suez Canal. Paris is in a state of alarm on account of the repulse of the Allied fleet.

A Mrs. Sir Michael Chimo-Seymour's fleet gains a decisive victory over the Allies off the Rock of Gibraltar.

A representative of the *New York World* interviews Lord Salisbury on a matter that is not yet made public.



CHAPTER XI.

A PROCLAMATION.

THE gallant deeds of the Mediterranean Fleet found fitting counterpart in the national enthusiasm which prompted England to cheerfully embark upon an enterprise chiefly remarkable for its spirit of heroic self-sacrifice.

None knew so well as the leaders of the people the desperate nature of the struggle to which they were committed. Men and money must be lavished in the attempt to crush, once and for ever, the gigantic confederacy which had so suddenly sprung into existence.

The Council of National Safety early decided that the public must be made to realise fully the tremendous odds against which they fought, believing that this step would render clear the necessity there was for the drastic and far-reaching methods of organisation which alone might serve to assure the ultimate victory of the United Kingdom.

At a meeting, therefore, over which Lord Salisbury pre-

sided, the Prince of Wales being present as an ordinary member, the following proclamation was drawn up.

"TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

"The declaration of war by France and Germany is an open avowal of the determination of these two countries to destroy the Empire of Britain. This wholly unjust and iniquitous conflict has been forced upon us in a manner which has already called down the vengeance of the God of Battles.

"On land and sea we have, by the mercy of Providence, been able to defeat our foes and to save our beloved country from the horrors of invasion.

"England is still, as she has been for many centuries, Mistress of the Seas, and, in any ordinary European complications it would have been her duty and her sole interest to preserve that predominance for the benefit of mankind, whilst not otherwise interfering in the strife.

"But, unfortunately, it is impossible to pursue such a peaceful and beneficent course.

"The chief statesmen and the principal newspapers of the Allied Powers have candidly declared their action to be the prelude to a war of extermination! Great Britain, they say, must be reduced to the level of Iceland, stripped of her dignity and vast possessions, and her people ruined and disintegrated. These are no idle boasts. They are

backed up, as we have seen, by a terrible purpose and concentration of aim which have been stayed alone by the invincible courage of our gallant soldiers and sailors.



Lord Salisbury presided.

"In plain and sober earnest we are fighting for our lives, our liberties, our homes, for all that we hold dear on earth, for all that has raised Britain to the proud position she occupies among the nations.

"Under such conditions our duty as citizens of the British Empire is unmistakable. We must resolve to crush those who would crush us, and

not desist from our task until we have effectually secured the peace of Europe upon a permanent and proper basis.

"The Council of National Safety believe that the most effective method of illustrating the magnitude of the task imposed upon England is to set forth in simple figures the war strength of the Allied Powers so far as their land forces are concerned. At sea, England has shown that she can deal with them, but the necessity for invading both France and Germany make it imperative that there should be no under-estimation of their fighting establishment.

"France, then, has an army of two millions of men, with nearly 150,000 horses, and 3,000 guns. Half a million of her troops are actually under arms; the balance will probably be called upon the moment we assume the aggressive, and by summoning her territorial reserves she can place 3,000,000 of men in the field.

"The army of Germany in the field consists of over half a million of men, which can at once be increased to 1,500,000, with 312,000 horses and 2,800 guns. The mobilisation of the reserves more than double her fighting force.

"We are therefore called upon to face six millions of trained soldiers, with 462,000 horses and 5,800 guns.

"At this moment there are under arms in Great Britain and Ireland some 500,000 men, including regular troops, volunteers, militia and army reserves, with 1,000 guns and 15,000 horses.

"It is proposed to forthwith double the number of men, guns, and horses. The guns are in store, the horses are being purchased, and we call for 500,000 young men, between the ages of eighteen and thirty, to volunteer for war service immediately.

"The Commander-in-Chief estimates that he will thus be enabled to land expeditionary forces of sufficient strength for the first advance on the shores of France and Germany within a few days.

"We also call upon the nation to enroll three millions of men in addition to the expeditionary forces already detailed, in order to reinforce the armies abroad to such an extent as may be deemed necessary, and to provide for the defence of the United Kingdom in case of further attack.

"It will be the duty of Lord lieutenants of counties to act with local authorities in selecting from registers of all men capable of bearing arms, first, the local levies for the immediate strengthening of troops under orders, and, in the second place, the further mobilisation of the Auxiliary Army of three millions.

"Sir Redvers Buller is charged with the conduct of this further mobilisation, and each line regiment in the service will provide a complete company of selected non-commissioned officers and men who will supply the nucleus for the officers and non-commissioned officers of the Auxiliary Army.

"All local authorities should be guided by the following supreme considerations in discharging the onerous task imposed upon them:

"1st. The able-bodied unemployed should be drafted into the ranks of the army forthwith.

"2nd. Single men should next be selected in preference to married men.

"3rd. Care should be taken to interfere as little as possible with manufactures which by their nature contribute to the food supply and clothing of the nation.

4th. Selected officers and men of the police force should be utilised to extend the supply of regular troops drafted for drill purposes into the Auxiliary Army.

"5th. Special local measures must be taken for the adequate preservation of law and order.

"Inland Revenue and Customs officers will abandon their ordinary duties and devote themselves wholly to the commissariat and transport requirements of the troops, and for this purpose will act with Post Office officials, three-fourths of whom will at once be nominated for this work by the Postmaster-General.

"We cannot too strongly emphasise the fact that Great Britain is now fighting for her life, and that it is the duty of all her sons, without distinction of class or position, to devote every energy towards bringing the war to an early and successful termination.

"It should be added that it is the intention of her Majesty's Government, at the conclusion of hostilities, to recommend that the pay of all ranks of mobilised troops shall be continued for three months, to enable the officers and men to resume their positions in civil life with the least possible disruption or personal loss.

Signed, { SALISBURY.
ALBERT EDWARD.
WOLSELEY."

"There," said the Commander-in-Chief, as he laid down the pen, "that proclamation means conscription."

"No," exclaimed Lord Salisbury. "Conscription is compulsion. This is the call to arms of a free people. It is another prayer to the Almighty to set back the sun until we have conquered the enemies of humankind in progress."

"Whatever it may be termed, I get the men," replied Lord Wolseley, "and I feel certain that we can beat the allies on their own ground."

"Who leads the expeditions?" inquired Lord Salisbury.

"Lord Roberts commands the attack on France, and Sir Charles Dilke has asked to be appointed on the staff. His aid will be extremely valuable, as no other Englishman knows more about French affairs or is so well versed in the composition of the French army. Sir Evelyn Wood is intrusted with the control of operations against Germany."

"Have you formed any definite plan?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, sir, I am acting largely upon the lines laid down by the small committee which sat during the winter after we had received the news of a threatened hostile combination last November. We then thoroughly overhauled the schemes prepared by the Intelligence Department and the chief modification in the method of pending operations has reference to Germany. We abandoned the project of an attack by way of Belgium."

"Why?" inquired Sir William Harcourt. "It has always seemed to me that Belgium would be an excellent base for an advance against either country."

"True, but in such a gigantic business as this we must look somewhat to moral effect, and I believe it is possible for our troops to be simultaneously at the gates of Paris and Berlin."

"When do we move?" said the Premier.

"I hope to receive intelligence of the occupation of Havre on Saturday morning," was the quietly confident reply of the Commander-in-Chief.

"Havre!" cried several voices together, whilst the members of the Council exchanged looks of astonishment.

"Yes, Havre," exclaimed Lord Wolseley, speaking with



"Give me a cup of tea, girls."

unwonted energy. "The Seine is our road to Paris, and Havre is the first fortification in the way. I regard this as our least difficult task," he added, "and I am glad to be able to say that Lord Roberts fully concurs with me."

"Are you satisfied with the Admiralty arrangements for transport?" inquired Mr. Goschen.

"Perfectly. I wish I had the men to fill the ships your department has placed at my disposal. By the way," continued the Commander-in-Chief, who appeared to be anxious to escape further questioning, "what progress does your Royal Highness's inventor make?"

"Excellent," said the Prince of Wales. "He is a wonderful fellow. His men turn out 2,000 articles each

day; I have actually made three myself, and am becoming quite an electrical expert. I am thinking of preparing a paper for the United Service Institution on the true inwardness of an ohm."

The Prince's eagerness roused the curiosity of the other members of the committee. They asked him to describe the invention, concerning which very contradictory rumours were afloat, and their request was acceded to. Very clearly did his Royal Highness set forth the principle of the electrical apparatus in which he was so interested.

In the drawing-room of a house in Mayfair two girls were smiling through their tears whilst reading for the fiftieth time a pencilled note which had just reached them from Plymouth by the kindness of the captain of the *Peninsular*.

"I am quite sure that Frank is safe, dear," said Irene Vyne as she sank on her knees by the side of Ethel Harington. They were laughing and crying together over Rodney's letter from Malta.

"I am hopeful myself," replied her companion, "but I don't see how we can do more than hope. It was such a terribly dangerous undertaking."

"Oh, of course. I know that. But naval officers are accustomed to explosions. Boilers and guns and things are always bursting. Besides, he is so full of resource. You remember how rapidly he disposed of that Frenchman who was in our service at the Embassy. Father afterwards discovered that he was a most skilful spy in the employ of the French Police, and that he had found out the secret of the Foreign Office cypher. Only yesterday I ascertained how it was I had such a curious notion of having seen him before."

"How was that?"

"Lady Grasmere called, and then I remembered where I had met him. It was at a *musical* she gave last November in town, and the wretched creature was masquerading as a Russian tenor. He sang divinely, too. What a pity he should be only a *mouchard*."

Lady Irene Vyne would have been even more surprised and disgusted had she seen M. Pochowski, ex-singer, ex-valet, at that moment, sitting on a magnificent horse at the head of a squadron of the Imperial Guard, drawn up for inspection by the Tsar of all the Russias.

Captain Harington entered the room, hot, excited, and too full of his news to properly hook up his sword, which slipped and clanked against his spurs as he strode towards them.

"Give me a cup of tea, girls," he cried. "I'm choked with dust and news. Rodney has blown up the Suez Canal and I have been appointed to Roberts's staff. We'll be in France before the week is out."

Ethel looked at Irene to see how she would receive this momentous intelligence, but the girl's face only flushed a little, and her hand did not tremble as she brought the tea to her lover.

"I wish I were a man that I might also go," she said, "Anyhow, I will never forgive you if you don't send more lucid epistles than Frank has favoured your sister with." And she showed him the now almost illegible letter.

"Hello!" he said. "Poor old chap! He wept so copiously over the note that his tears haven't dried yet."

Ethel snatched the paper from him, and Irene coolly ignored his remark.

"How many men go with you?" she inquired.

"We start with 150,000. Once a landing is effected, 200,000 more follow. Then we make a forward movement. The advance will be along the line of the Seine. How jolly glad I am that I did the trip from Paris to Havre last summer in a canoe."

"Will such an army be strong enough to act effectively?" said Irene, who, it must be remembered, was an ambassador's daughter, and knew exactly the numbers and efficiency of the French forces.

"To conquer France we will need ten times as many," replied Harington, rising to depart. "But Lord Roberts thinks that the allies are hardly prepared for such a bold counter-move on our part. You must not forget that they lost the pick of the army of the north in the fight off Worthing, and our expedition, once it gains a footing, will be quite able to deal with the remainder of that Corps d'Armée at the outset. Of course, they will try to smother us afterwards, but they may not succeed. Pobs will work off a few tricks on them that he learnt in Afghanistan."

"This will be a war of men, not of tactics," exclaimed Irene.

"Perhaps both," cried Ethel Harington. "Frank, I am sure, will fight well, but it was by cleverness that he was able to destroy the Canal." She was so desperately in earnest that the others laughed.

"Teddy Harington," said Irene, amusement struggling with emotion in her tremulous tones, "your sister will blow up that wretched strake of water ten times every day for the next month. If you don't go and do something big I will jilt you and marry Mr. Briggs, who actually left cards on us the day after we all came back from Paris."

And Briggs, William Briggs, of Catford—where was that cycling expert during these troublous times?

He was the hero of the Cat and Anchor, the lion of the cycling club, the darling of every new woman in that town on wheels.

But his soul had been fired by the events of that memorable night in the Gare du Nord and the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré. The placid joys of puncture-proof tyres and lever chains fascinated him no longer. Lord Eskdale's words rang in his ears. "You have indeed done your country a good turn," said the ambassador, and the phrase haunted him. Could he not do England another—a million—billions of good turns—thought Mr. Briggs, by organising a corps of Catford cyclists, and offering their services to the expedition?

A list opened in the Cat and Anchor soon had fifty names. In the club it was quadrupled. Armed with this document he sought out Lord Eskdale, who brought this offer to the notice of Sir Redvers Buller, and ere many days were past his eyes danced in his head as they read the following extract from the GAZETTE: "To be Captain in the Auxiliary Army, William Briggs, cycle manufacturer, Catford, commanding the Catford Cycle Corps."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAPTURE OF HAVRE.

"Combien?"

"Il y a onze cuirassés, cinq croiseurs, vingt-trois canonnières et—tonnerre de Dieu—plus de cent bâtiments de transport—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted General de Rosny impatiently, turning to the naval officer who was supplying him with this information. "How many men? They cannot land their ships."

Lieutenant Lelièvre shut his glass with a snap, and an angry light came into his eyes as he fiercely inquired if Monsieur le Général intended to convey any slight to the French navy by his remark.

For a moment the soldier felt inclined to strike to the ground the irritable fool who chose such a moment for the nice consideration of phrases, but he mastered the impulse and explained that nothing was further from his thoughts.

Whereupon the mollified lieutenant informed him that by packing men on board ship to the utmost capacity, the English ships could not stow away more than 150,000 troops on the armament, then some eight miles out at sea off the Cap de la Hève, and de Rosny forthwith rode off to the Fort de Frileuse where his staff were assembled.

Telegrams were promptly dispatched to the Second and Third Corps d'Armée at Amiens and Rouen. In both towns everything was in readiness, and train after train started for Havre conveying some 200,000 troops to the locality. Some 50,000 men were quartered in the barracks and fortifications of the town itself, whilst the others were split up into two army corps, the first resting on Montivilliers and the second on Harfleur, both towns being within an hour's march from the outskirts of Havre, and connected therewith by two lines of rails.

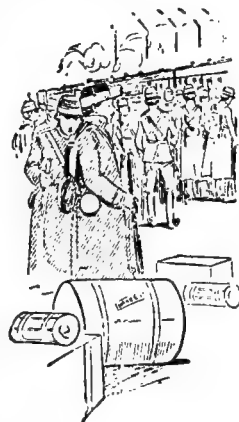
Havre stands on the north side of the estuary of the Seine and is very strongly fortified. The western, or sea face of the town, is protected by the powerful fort of Ste. Adresse and a redoubt near the Jetée du Nord. The harbour and docks are guarded by the Citadel, Bâtion de la Floride, and Fort de l'Heure, whilst the Fort de Tourneville and Fort de Frileuse, not to mention swarms of small redoubts and earthworks, provide serious obstacles in the way of a land attack.

But Lord Roberts, who was standing on the quarter-deck of the *Majestic*, to which fine vessel the Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Charles Beresford, had transferred his flag since the disablement of the *Magnificent*, had discussed every item of his programme in the office of the Commander-in-Chief before his departure, and was now engaged in giving his final instructions to generals of divisions and brigadiers. For the present the information was not to be imparted to any other members of the expedition, but prior to actual operations every officer and private were to be made clearly cognisant of their individual posts in the collective programme.

It was Thursday afternoon, the day following the fight at Gibraltar, of which no tidings had yet been received by either party.

In his latest general order to the troops, Lord Roberts, whose official title was "Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief of the French Expedition," exhorted all ranks to remember that the safety of England lay in their hands.

"I ask you," he said, "to combine rigid obedience with unalterable resolution. To you is intrusted the honourable duty of taking the first forward step on behalf of your country, and I would remind you that this will not be the first time British soldiers have occupied Havre. Your forefathers stormed the town nearly three hundred and fifty years ago, and I am firm in the belief that the flag



Train after train started for Havre.

unfurled by those glorious progenitors will again be seen dominating the heights which command the entrance to the Seine—the road to Paris.”

Six of the eleven ironclads, the *Majestic* leading, entered the ten-metre channel and steamed slowly onwards until within two miles' distance from the Fort de l'Heure. The



A wild yell of delight.

other warships at considerable intervals formed a cordon round the flotilla of transports, and Cunard and White Star liners which had conveyed the troops from Southampton, and were now anchored in the roads out of range of practical gun fire.

The three French coast defence vessels, and a number of torpedo boats, were seemingly under orders to remain for the present behind the guns which protected the Avant Port, and in the Bassin de l'Eure and Bassin

Bellot could be seen the masts of a great company of cargo steamers, evidently freighted with war material for the subsidiary move on England if the first attack had succeeded.

A tricolour float d proudly over the Bastion de la Floride, and the gunnery lieutenant of the *Majestic* asked permission to direct the first shot fired in the engagement—a shell from a twelve inch gun—towards that locality.

Never was gun laid more carefully. The excellent chart of the harbour in the officer's possession enabled him to accurately verify the distance calculation, three gunners declared the training perfect, and with a thunderous roar the first avenging missile sped over the waters and hurled a cloud of dust and masses of masonry over the railway line that runs along the rear of the fortifications.

But it did more. It demolished the flagstaff and its supports, and a wild yell of delight rose from the British fleet as officers and men noted the fall of the French flag at the very outset of the engagement.

A stiff artillery duel now broke out between forts and ships, and the latter, by constantly changing their positions, were able to disconcert the aim of the gunners on land. Consequently they suffered little harm, whilst they were able to do considerable damage to the battery near the jetty and the Fort de l'Heure.

The *Salamander*, torpedo gunboat, early distinguished herself. Commander Eagles was ordered to make a reconnaissance up the estuary, and he actually steamed to within firing distance of Tancarville, nearly ten miles up the Channel. The *Edin* and *Vite* set darted out of the Avant Port to cut her off, but were promptly sunk by the quick-firing guns of the *Majestic*, which had drawn closer in shore in anticipation of some such move, and this experience by the enemy made easy the progress of the audacious *Salamander*.

Lieutenant Eagles, on his return, reported the massing of French troops at Harfleur, Confreville, and Videmare, information which precisely bore out the views held by Lord Roberts.

The night was clear and starlit. The moon, in her first quarter, struggled to aid the brightness that rendered objects discernible at a considerable distance, and even through the smoke and confusion of the bombardment it could easily be seen that the enemy expected an immediate attack.

But the men on board the transports were ordered to sleep, and, after much wonderment and growling at the unexpected inactivity forced upon them, tired nature soon

rendered them oblivious of the thunderous cannonade which continued throughout the night.

As day broke over the coast line several of the remaining ironclads and cruisers, together with a dozen gunboats, joined the fighting line, and vigorously shelled the immense bodies of troops which had been drawn up during the night to repel the threatened invasion. Such wholesale carnage resulted that the French commander speedily withdrew his men behind the shelter of the forts, and the latter, disregarding the heavy fire of the ironclads, did such destruction among the smaller vessels—on a British cruiser and two gunboats being sent to the bottom—that the game might so far have been considered drawn.

But the forts themselves were in a sorry plight, and Lord Roberts' face wore a much more pleased expression than was warranted by the situation in the opinion of his men, stowed up as they were in the most uncomfortable fashion.

The day wore away without the slightest sign of definite movement, and beyond the knot of divisional and brigade commanders who knew the Commander-in-Chief's intentions, hardly an officer or private in the army but considered that a golden opportunity had been lost on the previous night, whilst every lapsing hour gave the enemy more time to consolidate his position.

This view prevailed amongst the Frenchmen also, and perhaps the only man on shore who mistrusted the seeming hesitancy of the British was General de Rosny.

Delay in itself was irksome. It was now fraught with foreboding.

The physical and nervous strain upon his troops was not wholly to his taste, but good and careful soldier as he was he spent the time in supervising every detail of the defence from any possible point of attack, which, he was sure, would take place that night.

About seven o'clock in the evening, signals from the flagship to the troopships caused a flutter of expectation on all hands, to be followed by a feeling of profound astonishment as the flotilla, accompanied by a strong guard of ironclads and cruisers, bore off in stately procession towards the north-west, as though bound for Cherbourg.

"It is an infamous ruse—this bombardment—to draw our troops here and lay open some other locality," cried a French man of war or dragons, as the strange manoeuvre became known on shore.

"Where are we a-goin', Jack?" said a Tommy in the Grenadiers to a sailor who passed him on the lower deck of the *Terbinc*.

"We're a-heavin' for Newfoundland, just now, an' it's five days of the best," was the answer.

"Of all the bloomin' chucks I've ever seen, this is the wust," roared Tommy, and the Grenadier Guards have never been nearer mutiny than they were when the rumour went round that the expected landing was not to be made.

So serious was the growl that it reached the ears of the commanding officer. He sent for the sergeant-major.

"Tell them," he said, "to eat a solid supper and smoke till they're black in the face, as they will have as good a fight before morning as the regiment has ever seen."

Then joy prevailed, and the fumes of nail-rod mingled in the breeze with the strains of "Annie Laurie."

General de Rosny was absolutely puzzled. He telegraphed





beat of the surf on the shingle, as the General sprang ashore, followed by Harington.

Without command or confusion the men at once spread themselves out over the lonely expanse of sand and pebbles, behind which rose the gloomy outlines of the neighbouring cliffs, and in a marvellously short space of time the whole of the 1,800 troops were lost to sight and sound, leaving the General and his youthful companion standing near the empty boats to await the arrival of the next contingent.

This was made up of the 2nd Battalion of the Black Watch; the 1st Brigade of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, the 2nd East Lancashire, and the Alershot Company of the Royal Engineers.

The three regiments, guided by Harington, and without the slightest attempt at formation, crossed the belt of shingle as quickly as possible, and soon struck a tolerably good road leading through a narrow valley to the tableland behind the cliffs.

On the way, a corporal's guard in charge of a gendarme showed clearly enough what the duty of the Grenadiers was, to which they had set themselves so quickly. They had spread like a fan over a very considerable range of country, had cut the telegraph wires along the cliffs, and had captured several coastguards and other persons who might have taken prompt steps to give an alarm to the expectant French troops five miles away.

It should here be mentioned also that telegraphic communication all over the district was greatly impeded by the fact that late on the previous evening a couple of gunboats gave special attention to the roof of the Bourse at Havre, on which hundreds of wires centred, and speedily demolished the top of that handsome edifice, although during the whole of the preceding bombardment scrupulous care was taken to fire only at forts, barracks, or troops.

It was a cheering sight to see the manner in which the sappers tackled the work of fixing the floating pier when this lumbering monster slowly bulged through the darkness and grounded one end upon the shingle, the tide being then on the ebb about two hours.

The shoreward section was hauled up by hundreds of willing arms until it was humanly impossible to bring it further; the next section was dragged up to join it, and both were then firmly stayed to prevent slipping. Smaller and more manageable pieces were drawn on shore from special lighters, and placed in position in front, and by this means a firm track was laid right up to the spot where the road led from the cliffs.

All this was accomplished in less than an hour, and meanwhile a very large number of men and horses had been

to Paris, Cherbourg, Brest, and Le Mans, the headquarters of the fourth Army Corps, whilst General Mercier, at the last named place, spoilt the dinner of the officers of the 10th Infantry by an imperative message to entrain forthwith. General Saussier, the governor of Paris, did not please de Rosny by ordering an immediate preparation for assistance to be given in the West. Altogether, Havre had more than the usual *mauvais quart d'heure* that evening.

But the bombardment proceeded as furiously as ever.

Lord Charles Beresford and Lord Roberts, with their respective staffs, were on the *Rattlesnake* gun-boat, with the flotilla.

As darkness came on, the fleet now being well out at sea, a wheel to the right was ordered by a single rocket. The fresh course lay due east, and after an hour's steady steaming several rockets were sent flying into the sky.

At last, far ahead, came an answering signal, and the *Rattlesnake* darted to the front to slow down presently by the side of another huge flotilla of tugs, towing an immense number of flat-bottomed boats, whilst six of the tugs had in charge an immense object which looked like a gigantic pile of logs.

It was a floating pier, of which the sections had been joined together in Portsmouth Dockyard, and so fashioned at one end as to be capable of being driven a long way on to a sloping beach before it came to a standstill against the shore. Adorned with a great array of steam cranes, two lines of rails, a couple of small steam-engines and other equipments, it looked a quaint monster floating quietly on the waves.

An altered disposition having been made in the order of the fleet, the course lay S.E. by S., and by ten o'clock the light on the Cap de la Hève was seen on the starboard bow.

Lord Roberts was evidently about to land his forces on the coast at a point opposite the small village of Blerville, and attack Havre from the land.

At midnight precisely the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Grenadier Guards, commanded by Lieutenant-General Massy, Captain Harington being his Brigade-Major, pushed off from the side of the *Tentonic*, not a light being visible in the entire fleet, and pulled silently towards the beach.

The noise of the guns at Havre rose high above the placid



General de Rosny galloped off.

landed, some 2,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry being drawn up on the plateau a mile inland.

Attempts at concealment were now abandoned, and the electric search lights from the fleet showed every inch of the pier, the gradient of which was not so extreme as might be expected, as every aridice in construction had been used to counteract the rapid shelving of the beach.

The motive was soon apparent.

Two heavily-laden vessels came alongside, and gun after gun was hoisted from their holds, swung on to low trucks on the pier, and then hauled by the engines along the double lines of rails until the shoreward end of the pier had been reached. Here the artillery horses and gunners were waiting for them to lumber up and trot off rapidly to their allotted station with the main body.

The wheels of both engines and trucks were provided with specially deep flanges, and as the gauge was a broad one, it was almost impossible for any derailment to take place.

The work went on uninterruptedly and without hitch. It was a triumph of organisation and forethought. Nothing had been forgotten, nothing miscalculated, and the senior officers in charge of the embarkation were familiar with every inch of the ground, as they had all visited the place during the winter and early spring.

By four o'clock some terrified peasants had reached the Fort de Tourneville and announced the landing of the British troops.

A telephonic message was sent to Fort de Frileuse, and General de Rosny galloped off at the head of his wearied staff to personally investigate the cause of the rumour.

He narrowly escaped falling into the hands of a scouting detachment of the 17th Lancers, and three of his aides lost their lives in stemming the rush made by the Death or Glory boys when they caught sight of the French officers.

De Rosny's frame of mind was not of an enviable cast as he raced back to Havre. He cursed himself and General Sausser and General Mercier and his cavalry vedettes with impartiality.

By the time he reached his outposts he had regained his normal senses, and promptly set about the necessary dispositions to meet the new order of things.

His men were weary after thirty-six hours of sleepless watchfulness, but the splendid spirit of the French soldier returned at the thought that at last there was something to do beyond waiting idly under an incessant artillery fire.

Marching by parallel roads to Bléville and Sanvic Gravelle, over 100,000 troops were soon in motion, and as the first flush of early dawn suffused the horizon with pink and gold, the British cavalry outposts retired to acquaint Lord Roberts with the tidings of the advance.

The Commander-in-Chief had now 80,000 men massed on the undulating downs at the back of the cliffs, and nearly 200 guns, supported by 7,000 cavalry, were in position.

The left wing of the British Army was the first to move. A deep ravine ran far into the land between the British position and Ste. Adresse, and it was Lord Roberts' intention to force the enemy into this difficult ground, which could be swept by the guns for a distance of nearly three miles.

The rapidity and dash of the French advance rather favoured this project. As the growing light spread over the landscape, and the masses of troops became more distinctly visible, shrapnel began to whistle through the air, whilst the ping of the tiny bullets from the Lee-Metfords, and the Lebel rifle sent a wild rush of tumultuous emotion through the hearts of those who heard the sound for the first time in actual warfare.

So far as could be subsequently ascertained, a private of the East Lancashire Regiment was the first man to give his life for his country. Ere long the casualties became more frequent, and soon a line of ambulance wagons were hastily carrying wounded to the shore, whence they were ferried to the ships.

Britain was beginning to suffer.

(To be continued.)

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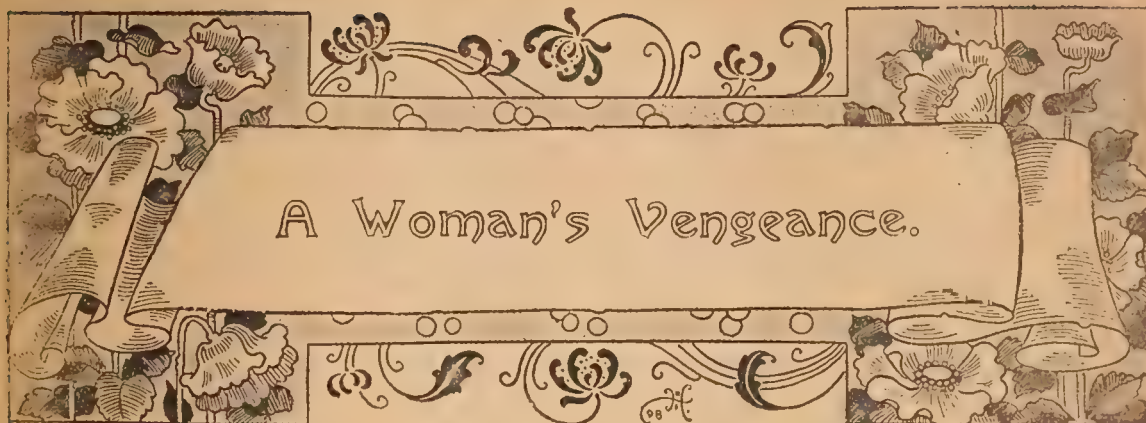
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TI-RHADA was only a little Nepaulese tea-gatherer, small and strong and brown, with two great braids of jet black hair coiled about her head.

Despite her dark skin she was very pretty, as Nepaulese girls go, not the least of her marks of beauty being her large brilliant eyes. But she did not know that she possessed charms uncommon to her race, for her mother and sisters were always too weary of tea-gathering to think of beauty, and Nepaulese men are not given to complimenting women.

In the tea-fields of Darjeeling, in the very heart of the Himalayas, she was toiling among the fragrant plants where for centuries her ancestors had toiled before her.

She has been there throughout every day of the tea season, every one of the fifteen years of her eventless life, and the thought had never entered her head that she would ever be anywhere else, nor that there was "anywhere else," for that matter.

But this day in particular a party of tourists were wandering about Darjeeling, and they at length came into the plantation, where one of them, a young Englishman named Mainwaring, spied her out.

"Good-looking young nigger, that," he said, jerking his thumb in the direction of Ti-Rhada.

"Perhaps," remarked his companion; "but beauty in women is always a relative quality. They are or are not good-looking, according to your taste and condition of susceptibility. The divine Blanche, now, might not agree with you."

"The divine Blanche, fortunately, is three thousand miles away, so I don't see what she has to do with it."

"Try not to be impatient, Mainwaring, but the eyes of five and-forty do not see all things as do the orbs of five-and-twenty, and—"

"And what?"

"Nothing, perhaps, and perhaps a great deal. But the others are hurrying on towards supper, and we must not detain them. Come on."

The sightseers passed out of the plantation without being seen by Ti-Rhada.

Mainwaring came back to the tea-fields for another look at the "young nigger," the following morning; and he came alone. Ti-Rhada was a bit startled at finding him suddenly close beside her, with that in his gaze which she had never seen in man's eyes before.

Not wishing to alarm her Mainwaring turned away.

His friend, Colonel Fritch, was on the hotel portico when he came in.

"Been hunting up more niggers?" he inquired.

Mainwaring bowed stiffly, and entered the hotel without answering. He was not only annoyed, but indignant. Fritch was an ass. He was dignifying the merest nothing in the world. Whom could it harm if he had gone back for a second glance at the little Nepaulese? What was she or any other Hindoo woman to him? They were interesting to look at, and he should continue looking at them all he pleased, and if Fritch had anything more to say about it, he would cut the Fritch party, stay at Darjeeling as long as he pleased, and go away when he got ready.

The next morning he made a third trip to the fields. This time, after persistent exertions, he managed to engage Ti-Rhada in conversation. That is, he prevailed upon her to listen to his questions and remarks, and to make little monosyllabic answers. This was not very edifying, and had the girl been less pretty, Mainwaring would have voted it all a bore; but it was very pleasant to see her red lips shape themselves into varying word frames, and there was a suggestion of music about the words themselves.

Mainwaring's pilgrimages to the plantation were numerous, but not another word did Fritch say about Ti-Rhada.

"I thought you people were only going to stay here a week," said Mainwaring to Fritch one afternoon, when Ti-Rhada had been particularly interesting, and her white admirer in consequence was particularly amiable.

"We find Darjeeling very pleasant and refreshing," was Fritch's reply, "and so none of us are in a hurry to get away; but if your young blood is gathering impatience for an immediate hegira, I'll call the clan together, and we will hie us hence."

"Oh, I'm in no hurry about going—or, that is, it doesn't concern me in the least whether we go or stay. But it occurred to me that your original plan was being varied."

The next day Mainwaring suspected that Ti-Rhada was glad to see him, and by the third day hereafter he was sure of it. He was pleased mightily. Surely he must have some strength of character when both heathen and civilised women were attracted by him!

In a little time a change came over Ti-Rhada. She not only listened and assented when Mainwaring talked, but talked herself, and for an uneducated little heathen she talked well.

Mainwaring was more than ever fascinated, but somehow he felt constrained to delay demonstrations of affection. Down in the dark depths of Ti-Rhada's eyes there was that which showed that love, to her, would be no light thing.

Three weeks from the day he first saw her, by which time it was her wont to greet him with a beaming smile, she met him almost sullenly one morning.

After a dint of much coaxing he wormed out of her that her dearest friend, a girl of about her own age, had lost her lover. Still worse, in absconding he had taken her future with him, for she was now an object of contempt and derision to her entire tribe.

"What will she do now?" asked Mainwaring, endeavouring to muffle the stab the disclosure was of his own purposes.

"Kill herself," said Ti-Rhada stolidly. "What else is left for her to do?"

"Why, in my country she would kill her lover."

"Yes? It is unlike India, then. I should like to live in your country."

"I'm glad you don't live there," responded Mainwaring quickly. "I—I should be afraid of you."

Silence seemed a morsel so much sweeter than speech to the girl's palate that morning, that Mainwaring soon became uncomfortable, and went away. After much ruminating, he decided to leave the hotel the next day, return to Calcutta, and thence home to England. But the following morning, when he went for a farewell glimpse of her, Ti-Rhada smiled her sweetest, and was so much more gracious than ever, that he lost his head entirely.

The weeks that followed were full of blind unreasoning joy. Not a thought did they give either to the past or to the future. The present was all sufficient.

When the autumn came, and the tea fields were no longer filled with brown-skinned folk, and there was a sharp chill in the hill air, Mainwaring got a letter from his parents. The intelligence which it conveyed filled him with dismay.

He was commanded to start for home at once, so he would be there by Christmas-time, and he was notified that he would be expected to marry his *fiancée* immediately upon his arrival. He was threatened with disinheritance if he ventured to deviate from this course in the slightest degree.

No mention was made in the letter of either Ti-Rhada or Fritch, but that the latter had told the Mainwarings everything in his ken about the little Nepaulese it was plainly to be seen.

Mainwaring was furious. The washed-out blonde splendours of Blanche no longer attracted him. Ti-Rhada was the only woman in the world for whom he cared. But—he must have money. Ti-Rhada and poverty was a combination which failed to conjure him with lasting spells. If he could have money in the degree of abundance essential to his tastes only by leading Blanche to the altar, why, to the altar Blanche should be led.

But he would not give up Ti-Rhada!

As tactfully as he could he told the girl his position, dilating emphatically upon the hopeless helplessness poverty would plunge them both into. There was but one thing to do, he assured her, he must go home, marry Blanche, tolerate her for a few weeks till he could get his money affairs in good condition, then fly back to Darjeeling and his heart's darling once more.

Would Ti-Rhada trust him so much?

Long and steadily she looked into his eyes, till she seemed to have searched out his every secret hope and fear.

"Yes, I will trust you," she finally said. "You may go and—and do as you say. You love me. You will come back to me."

With every oath of constancy a frenzied lover can think of, he swore to keep faith with her. Cold and passionless with the pain of it all as the bronze she looked like, was Ti-Rhada the day after he left her; and when the train had borne him away she sank into a little pulseless heap, and neither moved nor spoke for hours. March was to have found him back in the Himalayas again, but he did not come. Nor did April bring him, nor May.

Once among people of his own kind, little by little he began wondering if he had not made a mistake in falling in love with the coarse little Nepaulese tea gatherer. At the end of two months he was certain of it.

He had been a fool.

Of course he would not go back. The girl would soon forget him for some more conveniently adjacent lover. It was the fashion of her race. Perhaps she had forgotten him already. It was silly of him to have felt conscience-stricken after all.

"Do you know, dear, that I am really beginning to doubt the justice of my first impressions, and believe that you truly do love me?" said his wife, several weeks after their marriage. "I should be the happiest of women, for I have married the rarest of treasures, a modest man—a most a shy man."

In June they went over on the Continent to a little fishing village on the coast of Normandy. This spot was now very dear to them, for it was the scene of their first meeting.

One afternoon, when the sun made the air almost sultry, Blanche drowsed off and fell asleep in her hammock, her husband sitting beside her.

He soon wearied of smoking, found reading a bore, and settled himself back in his chair for a nap.

When he was nearly asleep there came a pressure of a cold hand upon his brow. Awakening with a start, he found himself face to face with Ti-Rhada. She moved silently down the lawn, beckoning him to follow.

Terrified beyond power of resistance, he obeyed.

In the middle of a little clump of trees she stopped and faced him, fixing her great dark eyes up on his with long and searching scrutiny, the same as she had done the day he left her.

After a time a shaking sob, like a mortal convulsion was wrenched from her bosom, and the rich bronze darkness forsook her skin, and left it grey and ashen.

"I see—I understand," she said quietly. "You are all hers. Nothing within you is any more mine, nor his neither."

"His?"

"I speak of the little dead babe, lying alone under the tea-plants in the Darjeeling fields."

Mainwaring groaned, but could not move. Nor could he even raise a defensive arm, though he saw what her clenched hand held when it flashed upwards into the air before it fell with smiting force upon his bosom.

He felt the sudden sharp pain, saw the crimson answer his life-blood made to her knife, lurched, caught himself and fell backward upon the turf; but not an articulate sound did he utter, not even when he watched her turn from him and glide swiftly, noiselessly towards the sleeping Blanche.

G. D. M.

THE CHOICE OF A LOVER.

"Two offers of marriage in one day! Well, which suffer is to receive the happy affirmative, Meta?"

The speaker, a middle-aged woman, regarded the girl before her with evident admiration and affection.

Meta Randall's fair face wore a perplexed expression, and her sweet voice trembled as she replied:

"If I only knew, auntie!"

To one even less versed in the character of the girl than Mrs. Preston, the sincere regret in her tone would have been ample assurance that neither coquetry nor vanity had induced such a reply.

The elder lady observed her curiously for a moment, and then said:

"Since both men are handsome and equally eligible, you should trust entirely to your heart to decide."

"But, auntie dear, my heart speaks as favourably for one as the other. Harry and Phil have been my friends, my cavaliers, from childhood. It would seem unnatural not to love them both. I feel that I could marry either to-morrow and never regret my choice. I am sure I love them equally."

"Was ever a poor girl in such a pitiable condition of uncertainty? Do choose my husband for me!" she entreated, as she dropped upon a cushion at Mrs. Preston's feet.

The aunt gently patted the head upon her lap.

"It's a great responsibility, Meta, to place upon my shoulders. What if, after all, I should choose the wrong one? But I have a plan, at least. How feasible it may prove, you are the one to determine."

As Mrs. Preston unfolded her scheme Meta's drooping head was lifted; then smiles of delight chased each other over her features; and finally, as the elder woman finished speaking, she sprang to her feet, exclaiming joyously:

"Just the thing, you dear, original auntie! Now take this, and this, and this!" And laughing merrily, she kissed her again and again.

"There, my dear, there! Better wait and learn the success of the plan," exclaimed Mrs. Preston. "Toss letters must be answered immediately," she added, pointing to the crumpled missives on the floor.

"Certainly," the girl replied, as she picked up the letters. "Oh, it's too funny!" she added, as she ran gaily from the room.

That evening, in response to the invitations she had sent them, Henry Davis and Philip Stanton called upon her. Mr. Davis arrived a few minutes later than Mr. Stanton, and a look of disappointment was plainly apparent upon the face of each at the unexpected presence of the other.

Miss Randall, however, was in the best of spirits, and she talked brightly upon minor topics until a feeling of mutual fellowship was apparently established between the men. Then, with womanly tact, she gravely introduced the subject which concerned them all.

"Harry—Phil," she began, "I have invited you here, not, indeed, to answer the question which both of you honoured me by asking, but to make a proposition to you. You will think me an odd girl, perhaps, but at least you cannot reproach me for either coquetry or dishonesty when I tell you that my answer holds a condition. First I want to ask you one question: Have I ever, by word, or look, or action, signified to either that

he was a favourite in my regard? In all the years of our friendship, have I ever manifested any affection for one that I have not as freely accorded to the other?"

The flush which gradually suffused her face displayed the excitement her candour had provoked, and she drew a deep breath of relief as both men simultaneously answered:

"Never!"

"Thanks. Now listen to my frank admission. As far as I have been able to analyse my feelings I am sure I love you both equally. As I can accept but one, the question must be decided for me—hence the condition. If either or both refuse to accept it I must stipulate that our past harmonious relations be sustained without any future reference to the possibility of marriage with either. And now the condition!"

"The condition!" both men quickly repeated.

"I propose a bicycle race between us three. I am to have the precedence of two minutes in starting. It is to be a three mile race upon the road between this house and old 'Bell Inn,' you know the road. The one who overtakes me before or as we reach the inn, will not only be the winner of the race, but also of a wife. If you overtake me at the same time or I reach the goal first, you will draw lots to see who is the victor."

The faces of the men wore an odd expression, but they promptly exclaimed:

"We agree."

It was a beautiful May morning, and the picturesque road leading to the Bell Inn was an appropriate one for a race which must in any case afford a romantic ending.

It was just ten o'clock when Meta Randall, neatly attired in a cycling suit of light grey, passed out of the house, with a merry laugh and a graceful toss of the head towards Davis and Stanton, at the quick ring of a bell, the signal for starting. Declining the proffered assistance of the competitors she mounted her bicycle and sped quickly down the road.

"What a glorious spin!" thought Meta, as the swift motion sent the exultant blood leaping through every artery, and every fibre of her body thrilled with the exuberant joy of living.

Faster and faster she flew along, until her efforts seemed involuntary. To herself she seemed impalpable and endowed with a freedom as perfect as the breeze which fanned her crimson cheek and tenderly lifted the curls about her face.

So completely did Nature's influence enthrall her that no thought of the ride, its purpose, or the two men who were speeding behind her, entered her mind until a shout informed her of the fact that Davis was rapidly gaining on her.

Then, quicker than a flash of light, came that for which she had previously so longed—the knowledge that one of these men was dearer to her than the other. Pure, tender and sweet, yet full of fear it came, causing a quick gasping for breath and a deepening flush upon the cheeks as she realised that perhaps the knowledge came too late, and that if Harry Davis won the race the happiness of two lives must certainly be wrecked.

With a voiceless prayer more fervent than any she had ever breathed before, she redoubled her own efforts

to reach the inn as she heard the gentle whizzing of a wheel behind her.

"Philip, Philip, Philip!" appealingly resounded through her brain like a human voice. In agony she clutched the handle-bars more firmly, bent her body forward as she exerted every muscle to the uttermost and pedaled with the greatest rapidity in her determination to win the goal ahead of Davis. If she succeeded there was one more chance for Stanton to win by drawing lots.

The inn was just in sight. If Davis should win!

"Oh, no! Not that!" she whispered.

She was trembling with excitement; a sudden mist clouded her sight—a rumbling in her ears partially deafened her. A few more yards! Then there was a far off shout, a gentle touch upon her arm, and next—

A sense of dizziness and the recollection of falling from her bicycle came to her as she opened her eyes and saw—not Davis, but Philip Stanton, bending over her with tender solicitude and uttering loving exclamations.

J. G. SHORE.

SAVING A HUSBAND.

"MARION, you must do it!"

"Ernest! How can I?"

"Come, be seated. Let me finish. It is for the happiness of both of you that I come to you with a word of warning."

Her face assumed a look of alarm as her husband's cousin uttered the last words in a grave tone.

"Why, what do you mean? What has happened?"

"Nothing yet, but something may, unless you take my advice."

"Oh, Ernest, tell me what it is. Is it about Dick?"

"Yes, and you. Your baby has been dead a whole year, and still you wear these mourning gowns, and spend a great deal of time in weeping. The dear child is in Heaven; you know he is better off, and you cannot bring him back. You have been so absorbed in your grief that poor Dick has been neglected. A fellow can't stand that sort of thing for long: he must have a bright and cheery place to come to when business is over."

"Dick loves you truly. I have no doubt," he continued. "But you will go nowhere with him, and he needs amusement and companionship, and is seeking it elsewhere. Where is he to-night?"

"At the club. Oh, Ernest, you strike terror to my heart!"

"That's just what I want to—no, hardly that, but I want to arouse you from your grief for the dead, to look to the living. This great danger that threatens may be averted, but you must be brave and sensible, and I will help you."

Marion clasped her hands and waited for the rest.

"You know that Dick has spent much of his time in my office lately, far more than he used to. Can you guess why?"

"There is a lady typewriter—her name is Kate Armstrong, who works for me and the man who shaves the suite of rooms with me. I have heard Dick call her 'Birdie.' My dear girl, be calm, don't start so! You need all your—"

"And you allow such things in your office!"

"How can I help it? She does not belong exclusively to me, and the other fellow is out most of the day. And if I say anything to Dick I shall offend him."

"You could get her discharged if you liked."

"What would be gained by that? It would only make matters worse, for he would sympathise with the girl and seek her elsewhere."

"Oh, that I should live to hear such things of Dick!"

She was walking the floor excitedly now, wringing her hands and sobbing.

"Marion, it seems cruel to tell you this, but you must save him."

"What can I do?" she wailed.

"In the first place stop crying, pull yourself together and face the situation. Here is my plan:

"The Arion Society will give a masked fancy dress ball at the Botanic Gardens on Thursday night, and I overheard him trying to persuade her to go with him. She has a little place put down for the dance, you know."

"What! And this creature that he calls 'Birdie,' is she—pretty?"

"Oh, yes, she is quite pretty. She wasn't sure of going, but told him she would call him up at his office on the telephone to-morrow. Now I have learnt that she cannot go, but you must call him up, personate 'Birdie,' and make arrangements to take her place. Then you can find out the whole situation."

"Oh, Ernest, I cannot go to a masked ball! It seems too heartless after baby's death!"

"Marion, you can, and you must. Bury your grief, show him that you can be as charming as you were three years ago, when you were married, and make him feel ashamed of having thought of 'Birdie' for a moment. Think how much is at stake, and that it is for the happiness of you both."

She thought of how she loved Dick, and what agony it would be to lose him, and resolutely dried her tears.

"I'll do it, Ernest!"

"Now, that's the right spirit to have! To-morrow at five minutes past one be at my office. I will send her out promptly at one o'clock for her lunch, then you can be free to talk to Dick."

"Yes, send her out, for I should annihilate her by a look!"

Marion Graham, after a night spent in devising ways and means to win Dick back, and keep him when won, followed the advice of her cousin, and was at his office at the appointed time.

As she entered the front door a very pretty girl came out, who she felt sure was Birdie. Instinctively she drew back her skirts, lest their garments should touch.

"Ernest, she's gone, is she?"

"Yes; left a few minutes ago."

"I am sure I saw her as I came in."

"Yes, probably."

Then he called up Dick, and told her what to say.

"Mr. Graham, someone at the instrument for you," said the office boy.

"Botheration!" exclaimed Dick. "I want to finish this report without interruption. Ask who it is and what he wants."

"It's a lady, sir."

"Oh, all right! Will be there at once."

"Are you there?"

"Hallo, Dick!" came from the other end of the wire.

"Oh, is that you, Birdie?"

"Yes, how are you to-day?"

"First-rate. Can you go to-morrow night?"

"Yes, that's what I want to talk about."

"Well, I say, wait a few minutes, and I'll come round and take you out to lunch, and we'll arrange it all."

"Oh, no, thank you, Dick, I couldn't possibly go to-day, I have to hurry out, just get a little something, and come back and work all the afternoon on an important piece of business."

"Too bad; but you are going to the ball, are you not?"

"Oh, yes! And, I say, Dick, I'll look up a costume, and then write you all particulars, where to meet me, etc. But don't come to the office to-morrow. I shall be very busy in the morning; for I want to get off in the afternoon. Don't dare to write, either. Good-bye, you'll get my letter in the morning."

"All right—good-bye, dear."

Next morning Dick received a letter at his office—typewritten—explaining all that was necessary for their arrangements. The signature "Birdie," was typewritten.

In the evening he told his wife he was going to the club.

"Don't sit up, Marion, I may be late—going to meet some fellows there, got a big thing on hand. Good-night. Go to bed early, and don't fret."

He kissed her, and as the door closed behind him, she said:

"No, I won't fret, Dick Graham, but if I don't make you ashamed of this night's work, I'm much mistaken."

An hour later a cab stood at the corner of the street, and a woman, cloaked and veiled, entered it. The coachman drove to a fashionable club, and as it stopped, a man ran lightly down the steps and joined the other occupant. Then they drove to the Gardens.

The ball was in full swing, and Marion Graham feasted her eyes upon the brilliant scene, while various emotions filled her soul.

Ah, Marion, you forget you have been out of the field for some time! Domestic duties, ties of motherhood, and the loss of a treasure have all suddenly and subdued your spirits. The atmosphere of the home has been dull and heavy with grief. But Ernest was right, she must make an effort to throw it off, and live for the living. Poor Dick, what a hard time he had of it! How different she would be in the future! She would show him that she was more companionable than any Birdie that ever lived!

The music was exhilarating, the costumes gorgeous, and new life thrilled her as she looked at the ever-changing kaleidoscope.

"You are looking simply splendid! That costume is a beauty!" said Dick.

They joined in the whirl of dancers, and her feet responded to the music with much of her former delight.

She threw herself into the spirit of the occasion, and

blessed Ernest Taylor for making it possible that it was her waist Dick's arm encircled instead of Birdie's.

He praised her dancing, her figure, her costume, and showed her every attention possible.

She was careful not to talk except during the music, which effectually drowned the tones of her voice, so that he should not discover the deception being practised upon him. During the lulls she allowed him to monopolise the conversation.

At last it was over, and they entered a cab to go home. Here was to be her grand dramatic climax; the unmasking, his surprise, her accusation, his confession, her forgiveness; the exchange of promises to do better in future, and the fall of the curtain on their complete reconciliation.

She began to get nervous, and hardly knew how to begin. The excitement of the ball was over, and fear seized her.

"And has my Birdie had a good time?" he asked tenderly, putting his arm round her.

"Very," came in muffled tones from under the mask.

"I've enjoyed it immensely, and I am so glad you were with me! Let me take off that mask, I haven't seen your face to-night!"

She allowed him to raise it just a little, then lent her head upon his shoulder. He stooped and pressed his lips to hers in one long, lingering kiss.

Oh, if that kiss had been for her instead of Birdie! How well she remembered his fond caresses, and now they were intended for another. How could he so soon forget the old days!

These thoughts filled her as he held her close in a silent embrace.

"Why, what's the matter, Birdie? You are crying!"

Where was the dramatic climax she had planned? She buried her face on his breast, and sobbed like a child.

"Well, dearie, there, there, don't cry any more! It has been hard for you, I know. Is the play over?"

"Dick—I am—Mar—i—on. Don't—you know—me?"

"Why, certainly, dear, I've known you all the time. Now stop crying and I'll make my little confession."

"Why, Dick—what—do you—mean?"

"Just this, darling. I saw that you were killing yourself with grief, and I knew that something must be done. In my dilemma I went to Ernest and explained the situation, and we arranged this little plot. We decided that the best way to rouse you was to create an alarm for my moral safety, and between us we succeeded. Clever trick, eh?"

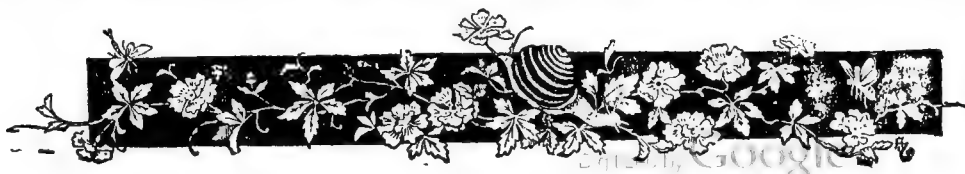
"But—Birdie?"

"Ha! ha! ha! Why, my dear, she's a myth—a pure creation of our fertile brains. The typist is a man. The girl you saw go out was Ernest's sweetheart. You are the only Birdie I've got."

The last picture in the drama was the only one true to her original plan. She threw her arms about his neck and sobbed for joy. The lost was found!

"Now, dearest, there is one thing more that I must say about our little play, which I think you will always remember: 'It might have been!'"

J. SCUDAMORE.





"AND so, dear, you have decided to name the baby Ned! Was Fred quite willing?"

"It was his own suggestion. Please like it, Elizabeth."

"I do like it, little one; I love it; and I love Fred for suggesting it."

As I stood looking at the pretty maternal picture of my sister Barbara adoring her first-born, my heart was full of thankfulness and my eyes wet with tears. "Ah, my little man," I said stooping to kiss the tiny scrap of humanity, "if you are brought up as I think you will be, you will be more proud of your first name than of your last. How you came by it is almost like a story."

And then I suddenly thought that perhaps it was a story, so here it is.

"Blessed is the man that hath his quiver full of them," saith the Psalmist, and I think that even had my father been less happy in his family relations, he would have striven to feel "blessed," in order to fulfil the Scriptures. For there were twelve of us, all high-spirited and running over with mischief. I, Elizabeth, was the eldest daughter, and Barbara, who was ten years younger, the most beautiful and the favourite.

Why none of us were jealous of Barbara, I am sure I do not know. Perhaps it was because we all united in spoiling her. She was the only delicate baby my mother ever had, and this naturally caused a difference in the beginning. But had it not been this, some other reason would have presented itself. That old woman was a deep philosopher who said of her unmarried sisters:

"It ain't never that there be no men about—it's the winnin' ways as is wantin' in the gals."

Winning ways were not lacking in Barbara's case, and as child and woman she was most perfectly beautiful in face and form. Some few, who had not fallen under the witchery of her personality, maintained that she was too small, too fairy-like—that the soft golden hair was too fluffy and luxuriant.

Small Barbara might be, but the erect little body was a storage-house for spirit and fire sufficient for a dozen ordinary mortals. Her pretty, imperious ways gained for her the title of "Princess" with father and the boys. My mother disliked the name, thinking it not good for Barbara, and we girls never used it for quite another reason. It was our small and only stand against the absolute monarchy.

But when she was about four years old another sub-

ject was added to Barbara's list—one who was to outstrip all others in loyal devotion, and this was Ned—black, savage, untameable Ned.

His mother was a full-blooded African who had been purchased by our uncle, the owner of a sugar plantation in America. He bought her with her baby in her arms, out of pure compassion, he said; for she was as untamed as a savage and evidently untameable—utterly useless to her late master, who was trying to subdue her by methods of which we were spared the recital. But the change of masters came to her too late. Though her spirit was unbroken, it was so bruised and festering as to render her death no surprise when it occurred some months later.

The child, whose name was Ned, was brought up in the quarters with the other negro children. He developed early a wild and lawless spirit, and when he was put into the field to work the overseer complained constantly that he was a leader among the slaves and thoroughly insubordinate. My uncle's attention thus called in his direction, he found Ned a man of twenty-two years, superbly built, and apparently as much of a savage as his mother.

Remembering her history, my uncle determined to make no attempt to break the lad's spirit. He wrote at once to my mother, in England, telling her the story and saying that as he found Ned responded to kindness, he felt sure there was the making of a magnificent servant in him. He ended by begging my mother to accept him and give him the individual attention that his bachelor home could not afford, adding that if the boy proved too much for her he could be returned.

Mother and father talked the matter over, and the end of it was Ned came to our farm in Norfolk. He was almost a giant—quite six feet four, but too perfectly proportioned to show his full height, and lithe and active as a panther.

Mother decided to train him as a butler. He learnt rapidly, and though at first he lifted barrels of flour with ease and trembled under a glass of water, he soon waited with a really stately elegance. The strangeness of the new home and surroundings kept the old lawless spirit in check; but familiarity bred the usual contempt, and in a few weeks Ned was king of the kitchen as absolutely as he had been king of the Virginian plantation.

Possibly this spirit was an inheritance; undoubtedly his appearance bore out the supposition, and perhaps from the same source sprang the wild gusts of rage

which seemed to possess him and sweep him along resistlessly. Mother remonstrated gently, then sternly and repeatedly—all in vain.

Pandemonium seemed to have broken loose in the regions below stairs. Early one morning the climax came. An uproar such as never was heard before rose from the kitchen, causing my father's hasty appearance there for the first time in many years. Huddled in one corner were the frightened servants, and in the centre of the room towered Ned, holding the group in subjection. Some trifle had irritated him, and this was the consequence.

Father was beyond measure angry—so angry that Ned's rage paled before his. He told the rather sobered negro that he would stand it no more. Kindness had failed with him, and he should now have the whipping he richly deserved.

"Not to be given by me, however," he added. "The constable shall do it, and I mean to send for him to take you away a once."

So saying, my father left the house in a white heat. But he was unused to interfering in what he considered his wife's department, and was also a man of quick wrath and quicker to getfulness; so, becoming absorbed in important matters of business, he spent no further thought on Ned or his misconduct.

It was not thus at home. So severe a measure had never before been resorted to, and we were all unhappy. Mother alone, and probably because she knew what manner of man our father was, remained as placid as ever as she sat in the nursery sewing.

But her placidity was to be rudely interrupted. There was a sudden patter of feet in the hall, a scrambling up the stairway, and Susan, the old cook and willow ruler of the kitchen, rushed into the room.

"Oh, mum, that nigger has gone up into the garret with the meat chopper and master's razor. He's going to kill someone, I'm sure."

Two bright, hard spots of colour rose in my mother's cheeks as she listened, but her manner was unhurried as she quilted her needle into her work and shook off the threads from her dress into the open fire-place. With her usual even pace she walked out of the room and up the stairway, we children with the servants who had gathered in the hall, stringing after her. On she went to the partially-closed garret door. There she paused.

"Ned!"

There was no answer.

Raising her hand, my mother struck the door lightly with her palm, throwing it wide open and disclosing Ned who stood before it. All the savage was up and looking out of the dark, scowling face, the bloodshot eyes, the drawn lips. His body was thrown back, and in one hand, raised above his head, he held the axe. In the other flashed the razor.

The servants crowded behind each other with smothered cries, but mother, with her beautiful, proud head thrown back, stepped over the threshold. She was slightly and delicately made, yet as she stood opposite the huge negro, her figure drawn up to its full height, her cheeks brilliant, her eyes flashing defiance into his, she rose above the question of brawn and muscle, to become his full equal in power, but no more.

The inflexible blue eyes and the passionate black ones looked unflinchingly into each other for what seemed to me an age. And then suddenly my mother's whole figure seemed to relax. The scornful, curling lips half smiled. The blue eyes looked infinitely soft and pity-

ing. She stepped swiftly to Ned's side and laid her gentle hand on his shoulder. "You poor boy," she said softly, "why will you do so?"

Wonder drove passion from the dark face—wonder held Ned spell-bound as my mother took the weapons from his unresisting hands. But when she bade him return to his work he seemed to awake, and darting a furious glance round, he rushed headlong from the room and down the stairs. But then something happened which I cannot think of even now without a darting sense of horror. Half way up the stairs stood little Barbara. Her nurse had deserted her and she was following after.

Spreading out her tiny arms she blocked Ned's way.

"You is not to tarry me down 'tars," she cried in her sweet treble. "I hurted my foot and I aren't a-doin' to walk."

Ned stopped and hesitated. I sprang forward, but mother, her face as pale as her handkerchief, held my arm in an iron grasp. I turned sick and faint; everything swam before my eyes, and when I could see again it was a strange sight that awaited me. Barbara was sitting high in Ned's arms, singing a little tune to herself and beating time on his woolly head.

He carried her down the stairs, straight to the wood-room, where they spent the rest of the morning. One minute Ned was chopping wood furiously, and the next he was sitting with Barbara on his knee, delighting her heart by strange stories and games. Mother made me peep in occasionally, but would not allow them to be disturbed.

"The child is doing him good," she said.

At last the nursery door opened softly, and Ned entered with Barbara cradled in his arm, sound asleep.

He laid her in the crib, covering her carefully, tenderly, soothing her when she half woke, and then left the room with noiseless step.

The battle was over. Ned had found his master, and that master was a lady.

There was never any real trouble with Ned after this. He now had a motive for good behaviour, and lived in deadly fear of being sent back to America, away from "de fiddle-string of his heart, Miss Princess."

When he felt his old rages coming on, he used simply to depart—where, we never knew. Sometimes he was gone for one day, sometimes for two. My mother wisely forebore asking questions, and when we children did so he would invariably reply gravely: "I was sent for suddint to go to the Island of Dardanelles fer to wait on my Lord Concarson."

Barbara never had one atom of curiosity, so she never inquired unless we put her up to it, but even then we got no satisfaction. Ned would pick her up and carry her off, saying:

"Yes, honey, Ned's gwine to tell Miss Princess all 'bout it—jes' you come wid me."

But on her return we could never gather that she knew any more than we did. Barbara was so easily distracted and so lacking in any desire for knowledge.

In one respect Ned was very considerate. He never disappeared if guests were expected, and on one occasion he even returned hastily on remembering a dinner party! "Jes' s'pose I had a' gone on dis ememberin' dis here party," I heard him say to Susan. "Dere ain't one o' you servants as knows even to set de table, an' when it comes to waitin'—Lord! I jes' run back like a har'soon as I come to think 'bout it. I ain't stop to take breff."

But these departures became less and less frequent as his adoration of Barbara grew stronger.

It was a strange sight to see the two together. Barbara's manner was as if graciously permitting affection, while Ned's was that of actual worship. Her first remark on seeing him was always, "I wants to be tarried;" and Ned knew no higher happiness than holding her curled up in his great arms.

I think she enjoyed the sense of his powerful strength. A great deal of his work was done thus encumbered, but as Ned could set a table better with one hand than anyone else with two he was allowed to do as he chose.

He was Barbara's willing slave, a slave whom no Emancipation Act could liberate, though Ned himself was a great abolitionist and fond of making speeches upon the subject in the kitchen.

Some time after this my father was obliged to settle in America. We sold up our home, and went out to Virginia. We arrived there in the early part of 1865, just before the Civil War.

When the war broke out Barbara was eight years old and was going to school with me. I was to leave at the end of the year. Our city was on the border-line, and constantly full of soldiers; so my mother preferred to send Ned to and from school with us. But one day we were dismissed a few minutes earlier than usual; and I started home alone with my little sister.

When only a square from our door, we met a Union soldier walking towards us. He looked admiringly at Barbara, and then stopped.

"Will you give me a kiss, my pretty bird?" he said.

She shrank to my side, speechless with terror. I do not believe the man meant to frighten her. He was a mild-looking little fellow, and probably had children of his own at home, but he stooped and lifted Barbara high in the air to steal the wished-for kiss. But that kiss he never got; for she was suddenly seized and whisked out of his hands and over his head, to his infinite astonishment. Ned was on the way to meet us and had flown to the rescue.

It was well for the little soldier, and perhaps well for Ned also, that Barbara required all of her faithful servant's soothing and attention. But from that moment Ned's horror of "dem Yanks" knew no bounds, and hatred of them included a hatred of their principals. His speeches in the kitchen veered in doctrine with an alarming suddenness.

He had things his own way, as usual, for the men were afraid of him and the maids admired him. Aunt Tilly, our new negro cook, alone spoke her mind, and I heard her do it from my upstairs window.

"You was a-talkin' de oder side of yer mouf," she said, as she hopped up and down in her vain endeavour to throw a dripping sheet over the high clothes-line in the yard. "You was a-sayin' dere warn't no right in a-holding de slaves."

Ned took the sheet from her with a contemptuous kindness and slung it over the line.

"Dat was before I knowed," he answered coolly, and then, emphasizing his remark by driving down the clothes-pins, he added impressively, "Dat's what niggers was made fer."

The year 1865 was soon to prove that Ned and many others were mistaken. But we children cared little for this or anything else that did not directly concern us, and so the years of childhood slipped away with only enough shadow about them to throw out the sunlight more strongly; and when Barbara's seventeenth birth-

day came, it was to find us children yet in many ways. Barbara was still the "Princess," but Ned was, if possible, more than ever her captive. The great change was that Barbara was engaged to be married—and engaged to an Englishman who had lately settled among us—a Mr. Fred Damer, who openly favoured the cause of the Northerners; for formality was not possible with one of his sunny nature and kind heart.

Except for her extreme youth, I think we all were satisfied with Barbara's engagement, Ned alone excepted. That Barbara should marry anybody was bad enough, but that she should marry one of "dem Yanks" was intolerable.

He waited on Fred at table with undisguised disgust, muttering and shaking his head behind his back at every opportunity; invariably beginning to wait on him from the right side, and just as Fred adjusted himself to the awkwardness, rushing round to the left. It really amounted to a petty persecution, which kept the children in delighted spasms of laughter and me in misery. My mother could not see from behind her tea-urn what was going on, and father never saw or heard anything. But at last Ned undertook to slap down as a gauntlet each plate and dish before his foe, and his mutterings began to grow audible. One day, on seeing Fred pay some little attention to mother, he spoke too loud for further ignoring.

"I sees yer, I sees yer, 'deed I does. Throwin' cobs at de cow, is yer? Yes, to make de ca'f take notice. Yer don't git dis yer ca'f, ef Ned kin help it—naw, sir."

This was too much. My patience was exhausted and I complained to father.

At the next meal my remonstrance took effect. Just as Ned was indulging in an unusually horrible contortion of his visage, and as my delighted brother John was stuffing all of his handkerchief into his mouth, my father looked up suddenly and bent his white brows on Ned until they met in a straight line over his blue eyes. Thus he continued to gaze at him until the embarrassed negro managed to get himself out of the room. Then, turning to the now sober John, father significantly motioned to the door, through which the scared boy escaped, glad to get off so easily.

My father never used unnecessary words, and as he knew none were needed to meet this occasion, none were said, and at least outward peace reigned until the inevitable first lovers quarrel arose. Then Ned was one broad grin; he seemed to scent danger for the hated intruder, and he hung about Barbara, perfectly happy in the fact that she, as in her childish troubles, seemed to prefer his constant attendance to anything else.

I was never quite able to make out what this quarrel was about, though it lasted several days, but it was not difficult to see that Barbara was behaving like the spoiled baby she was, and that Fred was very patient, more patient than I for him, for at last, finding Barbara alone in the library, I administered the good round scolding that I thought she needed. Unused as she was to any harshness, it did not take long to reduce her to floods of tears, and she was sobbing her heart out apparently, when Fred entered the room.

As I closed the library door, behind me two minutes after his entrance, it was with the fixed opinion, which I have seen no reason to alter since, that the male or female who attempts to interfere with even the potentially married is a fool. What conclusion the lovers came to in their prolonged reconciliation, I do not know. When we all met in the drawing-room in the evening Barbara appeared her old bewitching self, supremely

happy and contented. What arguments had been used to work the change I never asked, and Barbara never told me. However it may have been, the result was satisfactory.

Fred was a trifle more communicative, but indirectly. Taking me into a corner later in the evening, he gravely inquired if I thought my father would object to his taking Ned out into the yard and wringing his neck.

"If he did not, Barbara would," I replied. "What has poor Ned been doing now?"

"Poor Ned, indeed! He has been abusing me as usual. I was at my innocent devotions this afternoon, worshipping at my shrine in the attitude common to worshippers of every faith and clime, when he attacked me. Elizabeth, being behind the scenes, why did you not intercept the afternoon tea-try brought in by Ned with cat-like steps and handed to Barbara over my devoted head and prostrate form? I had two horrible alternatives: to rise suddenly to my feet, thereby upsetting the tray and all its contents, or to crab out sideways. I chose the latter, and even as I emerged was offered tea by my tormentor with respectful gravity."

"What did Barbara do?" I asked, laughing heartily.

"Why, Barbara came to my rescue nobly. She reproved Ned scathingly, and with the air of an insulted princess, for putting only one lump of sugar in her tea—I think that was it."

"Reproved Ned! and before you!" I cried. "Then, indeed, she punished him. The jealous hatred he bears you is beyond words. My impression is that he is not going to put up with your presence much longer. I have been for some time expecting a messenger for Ned from Lord Concarson, now siting a voyage to the Island of the 'Dardanelles.'"

"Not he!" cried Fred. "No such luck for poor me!"

I was nearer right than I thought. The next morning brought with it the news that Ned was off again, and with no farewell message except a box of dainty sweets tied to Barbara's door-knob.

We thought a couple of days at most would see Ned in his place again. But no—Barbara had gone over to the enemy; his own eyes had seen incontestable proof of a complete reconciliation. It was not to be borne, and shaking the dust from his feet, Ned departed in earnest.

Perhaps it was for the best. Barbara missed him sadly, and grieved long over his absence, repeating often her hasty words. But as the days went by she grew more and more absorbed in her lover, and I do not think Ned's jealous heart could have borne the sight. And when Barbara's wedding-day came, and our clinging little Princess was taken from us, I thought of Ned and rejoiced in his absence, believing that his undisciplined nature would have suffered a pang ten times sharper than mine.

But Barbara had not seen her faithful servant for the last time. She was soon to meet him again. And of this meeting I have heard the story so often that it has grown impossible for me to feel that I was not there in person, so I shall tell it as if such were the fact.

Fred and Barbara seemed inclined to spend the rest of their lives in one prolonged wedding journey. They visited our old home in England, stayed several months in Paris, and then made a tour of the States for a year. Drifting about in this way, they strolled one noon into the dining-room of a New York hotel and sat awaiting their luncheon. The waiters were all negroes, and as Barbara idly looked at them, wondering

at the similarity of their appearance, her attention was caught by something familiar in the figure of the head waiter, whose back was towards her. Suddenly he turned, and Ned and his "Miss Princess" were face to face.

In the joy of that meeting, even the man who had stolen his treasure was forgiven. He had no words too eloquent to express his passionate delight, no entreaties too urgent to implore their stay. The best that the hotel could offer was theirs, and no hands but Ned's were allowed to proffer the dishes. Barbara's happiness was but little less than his, and when they left the dining-room after the prolonged meal, it was with the promise to make their stay an extended one. With this understanding, Ned bade them a reluctant farewell for the afternoon.

But in an hour or so a message was brought to him that Mrs. Damer wished to see him in her sitting-room. He found her alone, lying in a corner of the low divan, looking pale and suffering.

"Ah, Ned," she cried as he entered, "my head does ache so! I have been to see Aunt Mary, and she keeps her house as hot here as she did when she lived at home. It made me so ill—just as it used to!"

Ned was all tender sympathy. She was his little mistress once more, and he was her great gentle nurse. He brought her a cup of strong tea made by his own hands. Had she asked for nightingales' tongues he would have produced them somehow. Barbara sipped the fragrant tea and listened to the familiar voice contentedly.

"Ned," she said, looking up at him suddenly, "why did you run away?"

For a moment Ned's composure failed him and his eyes dropped. Then a smile crept over his face.

"Yer see, honey," he said, "I was just 'bleeged to go. My Lord Concarson, he don' sen' fer dis nigger deep in de night an' all de way from de Island of Dardanelles, lessen he means business. I didn't even have de time fer to say good-bye to my pretty baby."

Barbara listened with soft laughter.

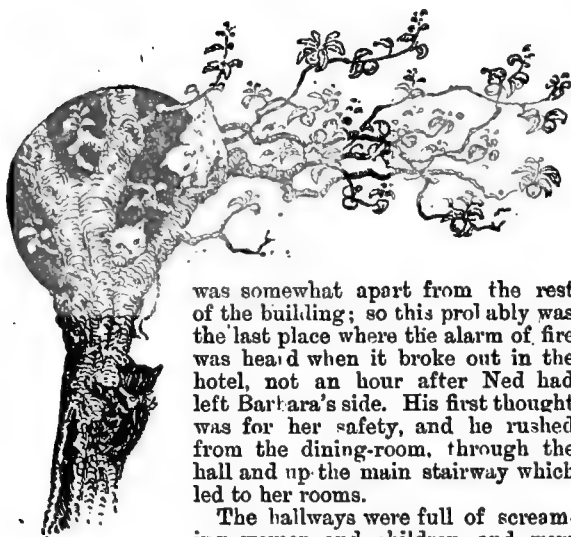
"Ned," she said, "tell me about the Island of Dardanelles."

Ned obediently began a long, fallacious tale of a lovely, lonely land, a land of tropic growth and splendour. The story was such as he had told Barbara over and over again in her baby days. Gradually her eyelids sleepily drooped and fell; opened, drooped again, and then, under the spell of the familiar phrases, she fell asleep.

"Fire! Fire!"

The dining-room of the hotel where Ned was in charge





was somewhat apart from the rest of the building; so this probably was the last place where the alarm of fire was heard when it broke out in the hotel, not an hour after Ned had left Barbara's side. His first thought was for her safety, and he rushed from the dining-room, through the hall and up the main stairway which led to her rooms.

The hallways were full of screaming women and children, and were thick with smoke. Great clouds were rolling in from every side. On the first landing Ned met Barbara's husband, a baby in either arm, and a half-fainting woman clinging to his shoulder.

"Miss Barbara!" gasped Ned.

"Safe," was the laconic answer as Fred bundled the babies into Ned's arms and caught the tottering woman.

The fire had been smouldering too long before being discovered to think of saying much more than human life now that the flames had broken out, and it required brave and determined efforts to accomplish even this.

At last the order was issued by the captain of the fire brigade that no one should further risk life and limb by re-entering the doomed building. Ned had been foremost among the workers, and he now prepared to enjoy himself.

An African is always a voluptuary in his pleasures, and abandoning himself with true negro delight to the sway of excitement. Ned drifted about with the scolding and twisting of the crowd, until he found himself standing close by Fred's side. He then resisted the pressure which was bearing him forward, and spoke reproachfully:

"I jes' hope you got Miss Princess a-lookin' at dis yer fire from somewhar. She allays did love a fire. Many's de one I done tuk her toe outen de back gate, when ole Miss think she war in de nuss'ry an' I war in de woodhus. Thar warn't none on it she didn't see a-sittin' up on my shoulder an' crowin' like a little rooster. O'e Miss, she cot me takin' her out onct; and she did raise! I disremember jes what she tol' me, but I know I ain't tuk de chile no mo'. Ho! ho!"

Fred listened with much amusement.

"I am afraid your Miss Barbara cannot see this fire from where she is," he said. "I took her across the city early this afternoon to visit her aunt. It is not my fault that she is not with me. They didn't want me, and told me so."

"An' yer ain't seen Miss Barbara sence de fire broke out?"

"No—for Heaven's sake, man, what is the matter with you?"

The two faces looked into each other—a strange contrast. One with staring white eyeballs and eyes full

of a horrible intelligence—the other white and ghastly with its dawning terror.

No further words were needed. Both men turned and sprang forward as moved by one muscle. But the action of the negro was with hand and foot. A well-directed blow from his ponderous fist made the husband of his young mistress stagger, and when he recovered his footing Ned had gained a moment's advantage and was cleaving his way through the crowd, which opened for him as did the Red Sea for Moses—a wall on the right hand and on the left."

As he reached the door of the burning building his path was barred by a fireman in his red panoply and power of office.

"Git out, ye black fool!" he shouted in unmistakable Irish.

Out swept that powerful black arm, and with what seemed but a gesture, the burly Irishman was brushed aside. The next moment Ned was up the deserted stairway, and had gained the first landing. Here he paused. There was now no one to bar his progress but death, clad in his most fearful terrors.

The negro stooped and began to draw off his boots.

The stairway hung by a thread and his step must be cat-like. He cast one look back into the surging mass of life below, and saw the e a man struggling vainly in the grasp of a dozen hands. He heard a hoarse voice crying:

"Let me go! My wife is in that place!"

Above the roar of the fire, above the shout of many voices, rose the stentorian tones of the captain of the brigade.

"Hold on to him, boys, hold on to him. There's one chance in a hundred, and that hangs on those steps. There shan't be a foot set on 'em."

Ned heard, saw, and was satisfied that the first part of his mission was accomplished. He set his bare foot on the charred steps and began the ascent, the first turn hiding him from the eyes of the crowd below.

A death-like silence fell on the multitude, a silence rendering more horribly audible the resistless, sullen roar of the fire, which licked and curled about the eaves of the house, and which the hissing water seemed but to feed. Great tongues of flame broke from one window and another. A woman's hysterical sobs alone broke the stillness, and she was sternly hushed.

Barbara's husband ceased to struggle in the fireman's grasp.

Have you ever known what waiting means—known more than it's impatient restlessness? Have you ever felt that stopping of the heart's pulsations for one moment of anxious listening, and then at some sound the wild rush and thunder of the blood in your veins, the agony of the clutch at your very life as it is being, your breath stopped in your throat? If you have never known all this, you have never known waiting, and you may pray Heaven to spare you that knowledge. This suffering and this knowledge are Frederick Damer's.

Crash!

A cry rose from the listening crowd in answer to the sound, and the woman who had sobbed before was carried away fainting.

"Thank goodness, it's only the lower stairway gone," said the captain. "The landing still holds. I can reach it with a ladder. Get me one."

"I'll go with you," said a quiet, determined voice beside him. It was Barbara's husband.

The captain turned and looked at him closely; apparently what he saw satisfied him.

"Yes, sir," he answered calmly. "Give him your helmet, Jack. We must go now, sir. I hear them on the stair."

They entered the burning house together. At any moment the roof might fall. Four lives were now in jeopardy where two had stood before. The sound of a footfall slowly became an established fact.

"That ain't but one person walking, sir," said the captain gently, "and you'd best not hope, for that foot's bare."

"Then he is carrying her," said Fred, and again nothing but the dread fire sounds and that stealthy footfall broke the silence.

At last! at last! Out of the smoke, out of the flame, on to the frail platform, stepped the gigantic negro, his clothes literally torn and burnt from his body; the blood streaming from a ghastly wound in his head; his breath coming in sobs like those of a wounded stag; but in his arms, gathered close to his breast, her fair curls gleaming in its blackness, lay the unconscious form of his Miss Barbara.

Once more he was carrying her safely home from a fire, and now, indeed, for the last time. By the help of the two waiting men the descent of the ladder was made, and Barbara lay in her husband's arms. Even at this supreme moment, he observed with a rush of grateful emotion that the blanket in which she was swathed had been saturated in water.

As the rescuer and the rescued passed out from the blazing house, a wild shout burst from the excited crowd, which pressed forward beyond control. But even as his dimmed sense heard the cries as the blessed air of heaven smote upon him, Ned staggered and dropped to the ground. The blood gushed out from his ears and mouth. He was picked up by strong hands and carried into a neighbouring house, where at least there were quiet and care.

In another room in the same building Barbara lay, still unconscious; but the swoon caused by fright and shock soon yielded to treatment, and she awoke, crying hysterically for "Mother!" and clinging nervously to her husband.

But her first fully conscious thought was for Ned. Fred could not command his voice to answer her eager, persistent questions, and it was the physician in charge who gently broke to her the news of his danger, and who left her in order to seek the latest report of his condition.

In these few moments, alone with the wife, "brought to him like Alceste from the grave," I think we may forgive a brief forgetfulness of the Hercules whose gift she was; but it was with a sense of remorseful awakening that Fred looked at the grave face of the physician as he entered, saying, "I can give you but little encouragement."

"Oh no! no!" cried Barbara. "You can, you must save him! Go to him, both of you. I promise to be perfectly quiet. I won't move—only go; oh, go!"

As the door closed behind the two men Fred turned to the physician with an inquiring look, and was answered by a shrug of the shoulders and an outward motion of the hands, more expressive than any words. Everything that skill could do had been done, but from the first it needed no medical verdict to tell that there was no hope.

Ned did not seem to suffer, but lay almost unconscious, breathing heavily. Fred, bending over him in an agony of grateful pity, saw his lips move, and, bending nearer thought he heard him whisper, "Miss Princess."

"Shall I bring her to you?" he asked, and, waiting for no answer, went hastily for his wife.

She started up with eager eyes as he entered. "Is there no hope?" she cried.

"There has been none from the first," he answered.

"Dear, he is asking for you. Can you bear it? There is not a moment to lose."

"Oh! take me to him quickly, quickly!"

He lifted her tenderly, and half led, half carried her to the room of the dying man. But in his short absence there had been a change in the sufferer. Agony had partially restored consciousness, and each breath was a moan.

"Oh, Lord, come git me!" he was crying feebly as they entered the room.

"Love, it is too late. You must not stay now, nor would he wish it."

But Barbara broke from her husband's detaining arm, and threw herself on her knees by the bedside.

Her presence seemed to rouse him. He opened his eyes and looked at her tearful face.

"Tain't so terrible bad, darlin'," he gasped brokenly. "I ain't a-cryin' none—jis' whisperin', jis' whisperin'—"

Barbara buried her face in the bedside and burst into a passion of tears. Her husband stepped forward to draw her away, fearing she might disturb the dying man; but Ned seemed to divine his intention, and, rallying his strength, laid a detaining hand on her sunny curls, raising her face to his sight.

"Don't take on so, darlin'," he whispered. "It's got to go, but I ain't goin' fur, honey, not to say fur." A gleam of the old humour shot across his face. "Ned only gwine to de shant of Dardanelles, honey, fer to wait on my Lord Con—"

A sudden shudder shook his whole frame; his face was contorted in agony. Barbara's husband laid his hand quickly across her eyes to shut out the sight.

And when he drew it away again all was over. Ned had at last made his voyage to the Blessed Isles.

ALEC ARTHUR ANSTEY.

"PEARSON'S MAGAZINE."

The current issue of this magazine is an unusually brilliant production. It is crammed with interesting articles, stories to suit every taste, and illustrations and photographs such as can be found in no other magazine published. It is a tip-top issue. The following are some of the contents:—"Pictures and their Painters," "Snowed-Up in June," "From Reading to Paris in a Houseboat," "Liquid Air," "Ourselves versus the World," "The Vicomte's Double," "How Criminals are Identified," "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," "Wire Walking." Its cover is one of exquisite design, and is in itself a real work of art.

YOUR NAME MAY APPEAR.

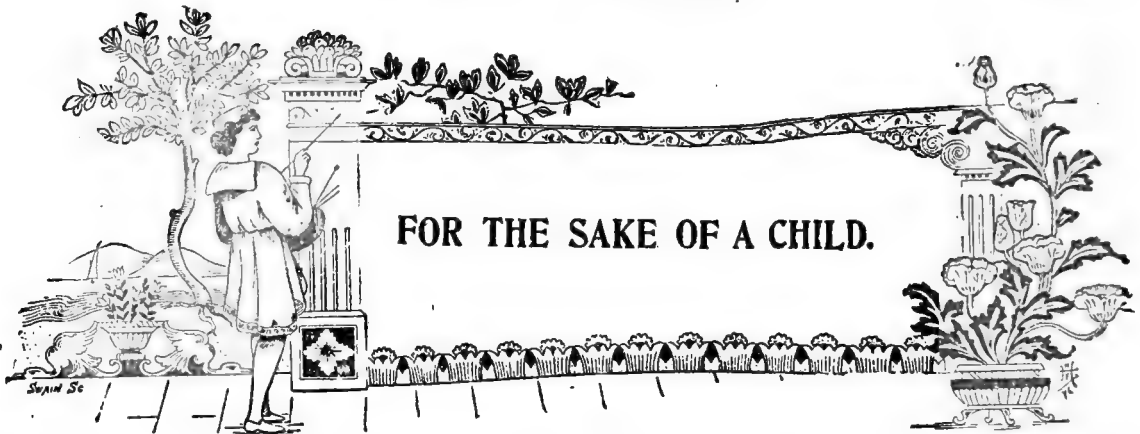
in this week's number of *Pearson's Weekly* as the person to whom a £5 note was addressed, and who failed to reply.

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Perhaps your name appears on one of these envelopes this week. If so, you have only to drop a post-card and the crisp £5 note will be sent to you.

There are no other conditions imposed, except the method of addressing the envelope.

Get a copy of *Pearson's Weekly* at once. Don't lose the opportunity of making £5 simply through indifference!



FOR THE SAKE OF A CHILD.

He was only a little boy. Only a little boy with golden hair and great blue eyes and white transparent skin, and he looked as if he had walked straight out of one of the great east windows in the church and come down to sing with his beautiful voice, which would make the old peasants cry when they listened.

And if anyone had asked him why he was singing you should have seen the flush which would creep into his cheeks. You should have watched him raise himself on his elbow and point out of the open window to the bright sky and the sun which shone winter and summer down on to the seaward slope. He would have grown quite excited, his eyes would have sparkled, and he would have answered back:

"I am singing to mother in her home up there, because I am going to see her soon, the good priest tells me."

So Guy's little throat would swell, and the soft, sweet voice would ring out, while his thoughts were carried far away from the dingy little bedroom, with the cobwebs which swung drowsily in the corners, and the pale mauve dust which raced about under the bed.

* * * * *

Joseph was standing in the street below. It was not really a street, it was not exactly a flight of steps either, merely a steeply descending path with great bare boulders of rock and rank weeds growing in between. The houses themselves, on either side, with their little green shutters and rough mural decorations, were so close together that when Joseph came home in the evening with his donkey laden with faggots, the ends would sweep the walls on either side, as anyone could see who took the trouble to look.

He was at the door of his cottage now with his arms folded against the door-post, and his head buried in his sleeve, and if anyone had been there to notice they would have seen that his face was bleeding.

Half an hour later he was still standing there. The singing overhead had ceased, and a sad little voice was calling, "Father! Father!"

Still Joseph did not move, only he shifted once from one leg to the other, and his whole frame shook with a sob. A little girl came running down the path towards him, her hair streaming behind her, her little feet in their wooden shoes pattering louder and louder on the cobbles.

"Joseph!" she called; "Joseph!"

But the man took no notice until she stood, pulling his sleeve, and quite out of breath with her running

"Joseph. Francis is dead," she panted. "They found him up there in the olive grove behind the Villa Panama."

Joseph's arms fell to his side, and he staggered back against the other post. His face was grey and ashen, except for the grey smudge on his cheek and the jagged wound below the eye.

"Dead! Holy Virgin have mercy on me," he cried. His whole body vibrated; his head wavered. He bent down and seized the little girl by the shoulders, looking at her so fiercely that she was quite frightened, and struggled to get away.

"Who found him?"

"Marie. And Luc has gone for a gendarme, for they think he was murdered."

Joseph's grasp loosened on the little girl's dress. She wriggled out of his reach, and ran away crying.

Joseph's heart began to beat furiously. "What shall I do? Where shall I go?" he asked himself. His lips were agitated, his legs trembling.

A glass of wine would have given him courage, but the cask was empty. He felt distracted. A bitter taste filled his mouth, and he rolled his tongue round trying to moisten the dryness of his palate. In another moment he felt he would be sick. He was suffocated with fear, and that terrible sinking sensation made his whole body jerk with violent spasms.

There was no time to waste, however; the wound on his face would accuse him.

"I was a fool not to think of that before, dash it!" he said to himself. He might protest, but they would not believe he was innocent.

He crossed to the back of the house and threw open the little window. The fresh breeze blowing from the east cooled his burning forehead, and he drew a long breath gratefully and stood still to listen.

Was anyone coming?

He heard footsteps on the stones outside; they came nearer and nearer, and then died away. If anyone had come in then he could not have moved.

"Father! father!"

The sweet voice seemed louder and more imperative. Joseph's eyes filled with tears, and he shook his head slowly from side to side.

"Ah! little one, what would your mother say?" he groaned.

He longed to go upstairs and say good-bye to his little boy, but a power which seemed irresistible held him back. He dare not trust himself by that bed of sickness.

Hark! What was that? A hand on the door; someone was coming in.

He vaulted out through the open window, perspiring in every pore, his heart beating wildly. In another minute he was running with marvellous agility over the rough, broken ground behind the house, slipping from shrub to shrub, dodging from tree to tree, and not even daring to look back. Before the sun was set he would be far on his way to the frontier.

* * * * *

Three days had passed. Joseph stood alone on the top of a mountain, looking with eager, bloodshot eyes towards the west, where the sun was already disappearing. He stretched out his hands with a pathetic gesture.

"Heaven protect you, little one!" he stammered. "Heaven protect you!"

For three days he had suffered ceaselessly. He was still in France; still, if the gendarmes had only known it, within twenty miles of his home. Here at least he was safe, on the top of this snow-clad mountain, among the ruins of an ancient fortified city. If needs be, he could defend that narrow slippery path against an army. One rock would decimate a regiment.

The loaf he had taken with him, however, had disappeared. All day he had eaten nothing; tasted nothing but handfuls of frozen snow; and his mouth and throat were burning. As soon as it was dark he must make his way to the nearest village, and steal what he could not beg.

It was bitterly cold, although the sun was still shining brightly, and a warm haze seemed to be hanging over the country down below. Joseph shivered, and turned back to the dark underground cellar where he had taken refuge. He stumbled along, staggered now and then like a man that is drunk, and bruising himself over the broken masonry which lay scattered about between the crumbling walls and picturesquely shapeless towers which still stood, weatherbeaten monuments of Saracen's skill.

His boots were sopping with the snow, and the clothes, which had been warm enough down below, were pierced through and through by the wind which cut across the Alps.

It was warmer down in the cave where he had passed the night, and comparatively dry, and here he curled himself up and went to sleep, stupefied with suffering and anguish.

It was already night when he awoke. He sat up listening.

Surely he heard someone calling.

A soft child voice seemed echoing in his ears.

"Father! Father! I want you, father dear."

He rubbed his eyes and went outside.

A terrible stillness brooded over the world. Not a sound of any kind reached his ears. The hum of an insect, or the cry of some night bird would have brought him comfort.

Joseph was alone with Nature in one of her grandest aspects, and he shrank back into the darkness of his cellar, cowed and afraid.

The moon was shining down on the snow-clad mountain till it glistened like polished silver; countless myriads of stars shone in the black canopy above. For miles round he could see the jagged mountain peaks detaching themselves greyly from the sky, here plunged in blackest shadow, there flooded with the silvery radiance of the moonlight, and Joseph turned his back upon it

hastily and threw himself down in a corner of the cave with the shame and the misery that possessed him.

How long he crouched there he did not know. He tried to sleep, but hunger and thirst were tormenting him; his brain seemed on fire; remorse, keen, bitterest remorse, had taken the place of fear; he was at enmity with God and man, an outcast, a criminal, without home or shelter in the world, without a morsel of bread, without a drop of water.

His despair was dreadful.

And then all of a sudden the words of the kind old priest, who lived in the little village, passed through his mind.

"Three days more—four at the most—is the longest we can hope to keep little Guy with us."

Was his darling dying? Perhaps at that moment dead. In the great anger which had threatened his own life, he had forgotten how soon the spirit of that little boy would pass away.

He sprang to his feet suddenly, and straightened himself with a sort of fury.

Was he never to see his child again on earth? Perhaps he had already gone to meet his mother in the fullness of that love which death had been powerless to sever.

He raised his white face and looked about him wildly.

Whatever happened he must go home; whatever risk he ran he must see those blue eyes once more, and stroke the soft halo of golden curls. If the grave once parted them, who knew that they would ever meet again? It seemed to Joseph, standing there, that he had forfeited his right to see his little one in the great hereafter.

Fear laid a detaining hand upon him, but he shook it off with surprising resolution.

"No, no," he cried, half aloud; "I must go and see him. I must go whatever happens to me."

A great quietness stole over his soul as he crept out into the moonlight and began to climb down the slippery path as fast as the steep descent would allow. He was feeling a different man now that he had made up his mind to risk detection to have a last look at his little boy; perhaps to send a message to that other loved one whose mortal resting-place was marked by a little wooden cross in the great cemetery outside the town.

Joseph was so exhausted with hunger and cold that he could hardly drag himself along.

Nevertheless, he set out resolutely, his eyes set, his head thrown back, one hand tightly closed, the other grasping his stick.

For six hours he toiled along the mountain roads, up and down, up and down, without pausing to take breath. If he once stopped he felt that he never would go on again.

Presently there came the first grey gleam of coming dawn, and once he turned his head and saw a soft pink light creeping over the snow-capped mountains he had left behind.

He passed through the town, pressing close to the shadow of the houses, on and on, until at last he found him following the winding dusty road which led up to the village where he had been born, and where his fathers had been born. Then he began to imagine there were steps pursuing him, and he broke into a run. It was not the thought of capture which frightened him; it was the dread of being taken away before he could see little Guy again.

The morning light came on dimly at first, and then

the sun came up over the mountains, with a sudden rush of gold and pink across the pale blue sky which made the motionless Mediterranean shine with the glory of a new-born day.

Joseph still ran on. When he perceived the grey roofs of the houses he quickened his steps. He was so eager that his foot hardly seemed to touch the ground.

No one passed him. The village was still asleep. A dog barked as his feet clattered on the cobbles, but no one looked out. He had reached the cottage door, his hand was on the handle when a tall figure loomed round the corner in a long blue overcoat and scarlet epaulettes.

Chiquet, the gendarme, had seen him.

Joseph stood stock-still for a moment, quite overwhelmed. Then he dashed in and bolted the door behind him. Three steps at a time he bounded up the stairs and threw open the door.

His sister, when she saw who it was, sprang forward with a little cry.

"So you have come back," she said slowly, "you brute."

He regarded her fixedly, trying to read his fate in her angry face. Had he come too late after all?

He tried to push by her, but she stood in the doorway, her arms akimbo, her massive frame immovable.

"So you have returned at last," she repeated.

"Yes, yes. And Guy?"

"You must not go in."

"Must not go in. Why?"

"The little boy is dying. He is already —"

"Father, father, is that you? Oh, father —"

Joseph sprang forward. He threw himself on his knees by the bedside, and covered the white upturned face with kisses.

A faint smile lit up the child's countenance for an instant, and he opened his eyes feebly.

Joseph seized the little outstretched hand.

"Poor little Guy," he murmured, tenderly stroking back the hair from the damp, feverish forehead. "Poor little Guy."

How thin, how pale, the boy had grown. His cheeks were hollow, his lips were white, his hands bloodless, and great black circles marked his eyes. Half-an-hour later, and Joseph's sacrifice would have been in vain.

His sister was weeping now. She had crept up behind him and stood looking down pitifully on the child's fading beauty. Instinctively they both felt the hour had come.

"Father."

"Yes, little one," so tenderly.

There was a long pause. The blue eyes were shut again. Presently they opened wildly.

"Father, I am so glad you have come."

The little fingers tightened their grasp; a spasm ran through the tiny body. Joseph rested his head on the edge of the bed sobbing.

He could hear Chiquet battering on the door below, and shouting to be let in. His sister bent down and touched him roughly.

"It's all over," she said. "Come, Joseph; you are making a fool of yourself."

Joseph looked up. If he was quick there was yet time to escape. In another moment the door would be broken down; the whole village would be aroused.

He rose to his feet, wiping his eyes with his sleeve. He kissed his sister on both cheeks, and crept towards the door.

There was a stir on the little bed; the blue eyes were opened again. Joseph turned at once, a terrible calmness in his face.

"Go," cried his sister, stamping her foot on the ground quite angrily; "you must not stop. Hark! They are breaking down the door. You can do no good by stopping."

Joseph stood irresolute.

"Father!"

The voice was so low this time that he could hardly hear it.

"Yes, darling."

"Are you going away?"

"Yes, for a little time."

The blue eyes fixed themselves on him, wonderingly, and then two great tears crept through the long lashes and rolled down the wasted cheeks.

Joseph turned to his sister, his whole frame shaking with sobs.

"Go down, quick," he cried hoarsely. "Pile up the chairs and tables. Anything to gain a minute."

Then he went back once more to the death-bed of his little boy.

"Father, am I dying?"

Joseph nodded his head.

"I am going to mother. The good priest told me so."

"Yes."

Once more the blue eyes closed, and a rare smile lit up the little face.

Presently they opened again.

"I am happy—oh, I am so happy, father."

Joseph laid his hand soothingly on the burning forehead.

"Hush!" he said softly.

"You will come, too, soon, won't you?"

Joseph buried his face in the bed-clothes.

"No, little one," he sobbed. "I don't think so. Give my love to mother and say—"

He broke off suddenly. Guy's breathing had stopped. A beautiful smile was lighting up his face. Joseph stooped down and kissed the little forehead. It was quite cold now. Joseph thought he was dead.

He drew himself up miserably and listened. No one had come upstairs yet. His sister was shouting to Chiquet through the door. There was still time to escape. Gently he withdrew his hand from under the little boy's.

"Ah," he thought, "if I had not quarrelled with François I might have faced death. Now I am afraid."

Once more the little form on the bed moved. Guy opened his eyes appealingly. After that there was no more thought of going. Joseph knelt down beside the bed again.

Five minutes later Chiquet came up the stairs. He opened the door cautiously. He had prepared himself for a desperate struggle. His shoulders were thrown back, his legs planted firmly, his sword drawn.

"Joseph," he bellowed. "You —"

He stopped suddenly.

His prisoner was still kneeling beside the little bed, his great frame quivering, his head between his hands.

For a long time he stood there irresolute. Joseph's sister crept in on tiptoe and laid her hand on her brother's arm. All the anger had gone out of her face.

"Chiquet is waiting for you," she faltered.

Joseph got up at once, turning his face away because his eyes were red and swollen.

"Come, good Chiquet," he said. "The little boy is dead."

ASTOUNDING SUCCESS

IN THE

TREATMENT OF OBESITY.

MARVELLOUS RESULTS.

EXTREME OBESITY

BECOMING A

THING OF THE PAST.

MANY persons are doubtless familiar with the nature of the extraordinary revolution in the cure of obesity which, within recent years, has been wrought by the original researches of the now eminent expert, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It is evident that the certainty, the rapidity, and the agreeable surroundings of his curative process have been recognised, in a very large degree, among ladies and gentlemen belonging to the highest social circles. Keen observers who have an opportunity of judging assert, through the pages of Society papers and otherwise, that owing to the general employment of Mr. Russell's treatment, extreme obesity is becoming as much a thing of the past at fashionable gatherings as intoxication; and no doubt it will soon be regarded as nearly as disgraceful. The issue of an eighteenth edition of the author's singularly convincing little text-book, "Corpulency, and the Cure," however, serves to remind us that the popularity of the system has now reached spheres far remote from those of West-end fashion. The book of 256 pages may be had, post free, by sending three penny stamps to Mr. Russell's offices as above, and it is worth the careful attention of those who wish to free themselves of a burden of fat—not merely because it is unseemly and adds enormously to the apparent age of the sufferer—but because extreme obesity terribly interferes with the energy necessary in these days of competition to make one's way in the world, or even to earn a very modest competency. A large proportion of the letters of Mr. Russell's grateful correspondents refer to their delight at being enabled—within a very brief period, and without any irksome conditions implying semi-starvation—to attack their accustomed tasks with pleasure instead of wearied disgust, through being reduced to their normal weight. The popularity of the system is also largely due, doubtless, to the English hatred of mystery, which is utterly swept aside by Mr. Russell. He fully explains his *modus operandi*, and supplies the recipe for his preparation.

[The following are extracts from other journals.]

CORPULENCY AND THE CURE.

The appearance of an eighteenth edition of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's now famous "Corpulency, and the Cure," constitutes an unusual phenomenon in the publishing world, such as suggests some curious considerations. What, it may be demanded, are the characteristics of the books whose popularity is so enormous as to enable them to run through eighteen editions within a comparatively few years? Some little time ago it became a favourite recreation—much to the advantage of certain publishers—to make out a list of "a hundred books" with which it was suggested all students ought to be familiar. How few of these, the results of the highest efforts of human thought, have reached an eighteenth edition before generations, sometimes centuries, after their original publication had passed away. It would seem, indeed, that immediate popularity can be gained—and, what is more to the purpose, steadily

retained up to an eighteenth edition—only by ministering in a remarkable and exceptional degree to the requirements of stern utility. This, indeed, is what Mr. Russell has accomplished by the introduction of the novel method of curing obesity which is fully described in his book. This compendious little volume, of 256 pages, may be had (post free), we note, by sending three penny stamps to the author's offices, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. The enormous circulation represented by these eighteen editions is fully accounted for by a perusal of the book. It is quite evident that—as is proved by the evidence of thousands of cases successfully treated—Mr. Russell has completely revolutionised the treatment of corpulence. He has shown that any person may get rid of the superfluous fat carried on the body within, at the outside, a few weeks' time and at such a rapid rate that 7lb. or 8lb. are frequently disposed of within a week. This is done, too, without undue interference with the ordinary habits of life in respect to eating and drinking, and—paradoxical as it may appear—the amount of food consumed is generally increased during the process of weight-diminution. The weighing-machine is Mr. Russell's ally, constantly appealed to, in order to place the results beyond doubt. Such conditions are so obviously suitable to the requirements of fat persons that their generally growing desire to study the book is easily explained.—*Grantham Times*.

REDUCTION OF SUPERFLUOUS FAT.

We have received a copy of "Corpulency, and the Cure," and a very useful and well-written little treatise it is, showing how from 3lb. to 14lb. of fat can be harmlessly removed in a week. We quote rather an amusing extract which was published on the subject by the *European Mail*. The editor says: "I noticed the other day that someone had contributed a paragraph containing instructions for persons who wished to reduce their weight. I don't doubt but what, if the advice given was followed, the desired effect would result; but to follow it out properly one would not have much time left during the day. Care was to be taken not to eat this and not to eat that, while to drink of certain drinks was sufficient to increase the weight by about a hundredweight. Now, Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., is my man. His treatment does not consist of any starvation business. Quite the contrary, for the mixture he prescribes is an invigorating tonic, and improves the appetite wonderfully. He treats corpulence as a disease, and so long as his instructions are followed no one need worry about dietary restrictions, but jog along in peace and continue the usual breakfast of half-a-dozen poached eggs, two or three gammon rashers, and a pound of steak. It is a good job for the success of the 'Pickwick Papers' that the book was written before Mr. Russell came upon the scene, otherwise it is doubtful whether we should have ever heard of those jovial characters, Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Weller, senior, or that truly wonderful being, the Fat Boy. The only case I can speak of personally in connection with this mixture is a friend of mine, who tried it with remarkably good effect. He was enormously fat, and, although he did not believe in Mr. Russell's treatment, when someone told him the mixture made a very pleasant drink in hot weather, he tried it for this purpose. This was in June a few years ago. In September he had to be measured for a new suit of clothes, as those he had were getting very loose, and didn't fit at all. He continued with the mixture, and the tailor had to take fresh measurements at Christmas. Well, he didn't quite have to put on a couple of overcoats so as to make a shadow, but the measurements round his waist were just half what they were twelve months before. Like a sensible man, he always recommended Mr. Russell now wherever he can. So do I." His book only costs three penny stamps, but is worth a guinea. Send to Woburn House for it.—*Boston Independent*.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THIS PAGE.

ON page 329 will be found particulars of an entirely new form of football competition. If you propose to go in for it, get to work at once and solve as many of the names as you can. You might also mention the competition incidentally to your friends.

RECRUIT.—Here are a few of the rules of war as at present formulated by civilised nations. The use of poison against the enemy is forbidden, also murder by treachery, such as assuming the uniform or displaying the flag of a foe; the murder of those who have surrendered, whether upon conditions or at discretion is unlawful, and the use of such arms as will cause unnecessary pain or suffering to an enemy is also forbidden.

S. L.—It is said that there are more widows in France than in any other country.

M. S.—Forged bank notes may be detected from the genuine articles in that they are always a trifle smaller. The plates for counterfeit notes have to be modelled from a genuine note, and are, therefore, the exact size, and the bills from it, when damp, shrink. Government plates, which it is impossible to steal, are somewhat larger than the notes made therefrom, on account of allowing for this shrinkage of paper.

WILLIE.—Our word "negro" was taken directly from the Spanish "negro," meaning black, and would hardly be called a nickname. The common Ethiopian nickname "Sambo" is from the Castilian "Zambo," meaning "bow-legged."

W. K. would like to know which is the oldest prison now used as such in Great Britain.——Probably Newgate, which has been used as a prison for nearly seven hundred years. Its history as such can be traced back at least so far as the year 1218. As a matter of fact, it is now only used as a place of temporary detention for prisoners awaiting trial at the Old Bailey, and as the place of execution of criminals condemned to death in the county of Middlesex.

SACERDOTE.—The clergy of Russia are divided into two classes—the white or village clergy, who must all be married, and the black or monks, who must not marry. The higher dignitaries of the church are chosen from this latter class.

K. P.—Probably the employes of the Spanish railway companies have more consideration shown to them than those of any other country. One of their privileges is that of being entitled to the best seats, quite regardless of the tickets sold to passengers.

BATHER.—I have only heard of one case of the kind, which was reported on good authority about two years ago. Gezibar, a native of Silesia, was so buoyant that when he jumped into a river, he sank only half the length of his body. By attaching a weight of six pounds to his feet he went down as far as the shoulders, and it took twelve pounds to get his head under water.

G. W.—There are about fifty-five dogs to every thousand inhabitants of the United Kingdom.

F. H. H.—A shilling is intrinsically worth tenpence-halfpenny.

S. W.—The title "reverend" was until the sixteenth century addressed to many others besides clergymen, such as judges and eminent writers; but from that time its use has been strictly confined to the clergy.

A. P. would be glad if we could tell him what animal can live the longest without food.——Disregarding the bat and the toad, about which naturalists cannot agree, the answer must be the serpent. One of these reptiles, when kept in confinement, has been known to refuse all food for the space of twenty-two months.

D. G.—Nearly every British battle-ship carries eight, and every cruiser four, fully qualified divers, whose duty it is to repair any damage sustained by the vessel below the water-line, clearing the propellers and recovering the anchors.

D. D. S.—The smallest independent state is Tavolara, a little island off the north-east coast of Sardinia, some three miles long, about two-thirds of a mile in breadth, and with a population of fifty-five. This tiny republic was recognised by Italy in 1887; before that time it was a monarchy.

"Which English railway passes through the greatest number of counties?" is the question put by SLATER.——

The endless complications of branch lines used by several different companies jointly make it necessary to restrict the application to main lines. The answer is the Great Western, whose main line passes through nineteen counties. The Midland comes next with sixteen, and the London and North Western third with ten.

C. B.—Probably the guinea pig is the most active of new born quadrupeds. It sees from its birth, eats strange food, and runs about with freedom during the first hour of its life.

MEX.—The post of President of Mexico does not seem to be conducive to longevity. Of the fifty-five rulers since 1821, four were executed, five were murdered, and seven killed in battle. Of the remainder, it is safe to say that the cares of office shortened rather than lengthened their lives.

SEVERAL correspondents believe that they have caught us out in a serious error in regard to the statement we made the other day to the effect that no man can join an American cavalry regiment if his weight be over 160 pounds. They point to the fact that General Shafter turns the scale at considerably more than this.

I am quite aware of this fact, but General Shafter has only of recent years put on his enormous weight. When he joined the army he was quite an ordinary individual, so far as his physique is concerned.

A. E. K. comes along with this question: "Why is it that birds with long legs usually have short tails?"

The only use of a bird's tail is to serve as a rudder during the act of flight. When a bird has long legs these are stretched directly behind it when flying, and answer as a sort of rudder, and a long tail is not required. We are adapted to our environment.

T. S.—Teak is the great source of wealth in Northern Siam. The best workers in the forest are Khamus, who live on herbs and roots, rats and snakes.

JACK.—You would not be permitted to enter a theatre in Heligoland by yourself, as you are under sixteen. You could no doubt gain admittance in company with an elder person. The natives have their own language or dialect. "Snake Jim Hollander?" is what they say when they wish to know if you speak their tongue.

A. S. C.—The snail travels at the rate of one half inch per second, a man walking at an ordinary rate would cover a distance of four feet in the same time.

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